HEROES OF THE CHURCH

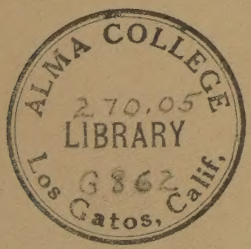
THE STORY OF HILDEBRAND

ST. GREGORY VII.

BY

E. WILMOT BUXTON, F.R.HIST.S.

AUTHOR OF "A BOOK OF ENGLISH MARTYRS," ETC.



P. J. KENEDY & SONS

44, BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK

1920

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For those who require a fuller knowledge of the Life and Times of Hildebrand, the following may be consulted: *Villemain*, "Life of Gregory VII."; *Bowden*, "Life of Gregory VII."; *Mann*, "History of the Popes," vols. vi. and vii.; *Stephen*, "Ecclesiastical Statesmen"; *A. H. Mathew*, "Hildebrand and His Times"; *W. K. Stephens*, "Hildebrand and His Time"; *Montalembert*, "Monks of the West"; *Miss N. Duff*, "Matilda of Tuscany"; *Viscount Llandaff*, "Matilda of Tuscany," in *Dublin Review*, July, 1906.

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EMPIRE AND PAPACY

CHAPTER I: *Empire and Papacy*

THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

THE first ten centuries of the Christian era had closed in a period of indescribable chaos when the stormy dawn of the eleventh century rose upon a disorganised world. Those ten centuries had, indeed, seen great things accomplished. The first great Roman Empire had fallen before the strokes of Goth and Hun and Vandal, and had risen again, like the phœnix from its ashes, in the Empire of Charles the Great. That, too, had vanished, and its shadowy sceptre was claimed by German sovereigns, who held little of the substance of a realm that had once stretched from the Atlantic to the Adriatics The old heathen world had passed away in a storm of persecution directed against the Faith of the Fisherman; and the Church, strong in her days of suffering, had, on her human side, expended her strength and nerve in a struggle for worldly power.

The fall of the Empire of Charlemagne about the end of the ninth century had left Italy divided into a number of independent states, over some of which the Pope claimed control. In former days, when

Gregory the Great was facing single-handed the invading Lombards, the Bishop of Rome had been forced into the position of temporal Sovereign whether he would or no; his successors held it in days when the only organisation that existed in a distracted Europe was possessed by the Church of which they were the head.

When Europe was torn by the quarrels of conflicting powers, it was to the Church that she turned for settlement of her disputes; it was in return for this arbitration that she received the territory known as the Papal States; and thus, by the end of the tenth century, the successors of St. Peter were firmly established as temporal Sovereigns in Europe. When we remember that their position as Lord of the World in the spiritual realm had never been questioned, we see that it was almost inevitable that the next step should be a claim to be supreme over both Church and State.

This, then, was to be the burning question of the eleventh century: Who should be supreme in the Empire—Pope or Emperor ? Church or State ?

It would clearly be impossible to give any opinion upon the rights or wrongs of the vast conflict in which the great Hildebrand played a leading part, unless we first try to get a brief glimpse of the condition both of the Papacy and the Empire of that day.

Nothing gives a better idea of the work that Hildebrand was to accomplish than a realisation of the

conditions that he found when he first entered the gates of Rome.

For a century and a half the Papacy had been literally on the brink of disaster; nothing but its supernatural origin could have saved it from the temporal misery and degradation into which it had been brought. Popes had been murdered, exiled, deposed by the hand of King and Emperor. Boys of twelve and eighteen had sat in the Seat of Peter; money and bribery were the means by which they ruled. It has, indeed, been well said by a writer of that period[1] that, " though the gates of hell had not prevailed against the Church of God, they had rolled back on their infernal hinges to send forth malignant spirits, to empty on her head the vials of bitterness and wrath."

As we turn the grim pages of her history, we see the Pope the tool of warring Kings. One, Pope Formosus—the Beautiful—dies of grief when he hears that Arnulf of Bavaria has failed to eject Lambert of Spoleto from the throne of Emperor; and Lambert orders his successor, Stephen VI., in solemn council at St. John Lateran, to arraign the dead man, find him guilty, and to have his naked body thrown into the Tiber. Yet Europe is scarcely thrilled, though she sees with a shudder the downfall of the Lateran Basilica where these things were done.

Then we find rival Popes fighting for the throne of

[1] Baronius.

the Fisherman, in a more terrible epoch still. Yet even in those dark days the first faint streaks of dawn are seen. Alberic, son of the monstrous Marogia, the woman whose evil influence was strong in Rome, rises at her marriage feast with Hugh of Burgundy, to whom she has betrayed the city, and holds her, the Pope, and the city in bond.

During the twenty-two years in which Alberic ruled Rome as Prince-Senator a new force arose within the city. Under the influence of the saintly Monk, Odo of Cluny, the four Popes who ruled the Church during this period stood in strong contrast to their unhappy predecessors. Monasteries were built, and piety increased, while the rest of Europe was given over to mad licence.

But this was only for a breathing-space. All too soon the German Otho stormed down the passes of the Alps. Pope and Senator were swept off his path, and his son John XII., a boy of sixteen, was set upon the Chair of Peter. The next few years saw Rome in the hands of this young monster of ungoverned and ungovernable passions. Even an evil world looked on aghast; and it says volumes for the deep-rooted veneration for the office, as apart from the men who held it, that the Papacy still stood for all that was holy and authoritative in Christendom.

Yet it had nearly touched its lowest depths of degradation. After the death of Otho the gloom grew deeper. One Pope, thrust by a usurper into

the underground dungeons of St. Angelo, perished of hunger. For a moment the dawn again seemed about to appear when another Otho, an enthusiastic boy-Emperor of sixteen, entered Rome with high ideals and made his cousin Bruno Pope as Gregory V. The Germans held both Empire and Papacy for a while, but scarcely had Otho returned to Germany than riot begins again; the saintly young Gregory is poisoned in the act of flight, and Otho, still but a boy, dies broken-hearted at the utter failure of his ideals.

The eleventh century, after the brief period in which the Emperor Henry II., "monk in all but name," and Benedict VIII. tried to reform matters, began as badly as might be. When Benedict IX. sold the Papacy to Gregory VI. the sin of "simony"—the sale of spiritual offices—had touched the depths. Though forced to acknowledge the crime and to retire from the Holy Office, Gregory only made room for the return of Benedict, and a most unseemly struggle began with Clement II., who had been made Pope by the Emperor Henry III. This state of confusion and strife was suddenly ended by the nomination of a new Pope, cousin of the Emperor, Bishop Bruno of Toul; and with him went the Prior of the Abbey of Cluny, Hildebrand by name.

"From that moment (1048) down to 1085, for thirty-seven years, the Monk from Cluny governed the Church." [1]

[1] Barry, "The Papal Monarchy."

From this brief survey it will be clear that in the early part of the eleventh century the Popes, though not the Papacy, were the object of the scorn and hatred of the civilised world. Yet by the middle of that century we shall find the Holy See not only respected and reverenced throughout Europe, but strong and independent of the Empire, "the centre of eyes that looked for truth and authority." This, speaking generally, was the work of the man whose life we are about to study.

It has been well said that "Hildebrand found the Papacy dependent on the Empire—he left her free and supported by almost the whole of Italy. He found the Emperor the virtual patron of the Holy See—he wrested the power from his hands. He found the secular clergy the allies and dependents of the secular power—he converted them into auxiliaries of his own."

But this was only one side of his work. Had he done nothing more than secure the independence of the Holy See, his labours might have been made void by his successors. In order to make his work permanent—and he knew that the opportunity was ripe—he realised that Europe had to be reconstructed on spiritual lines.

Let us for a moment try to realise the condition of Christendom in those days. The "Dark Ages," in which force and brute strength alone held sway, were nearly over. The previous century had seen the conversion, after a rough-and-ready fashion, of

Northman and Saxon, but there was little or nothing to hold the convert to his faith. Men were still absorbed in a passion for ruin and destruction, so that it was no more worth while to work for an honest living than it was to reform a kingdom, when neither the loaf of the labourer nor the realm of the ruler was safe for any long space from marauding hands. The ideal of the dignity of labour had ceased, therefore, to exist.

Then came the wave of feudalism, dependent on the principle of "might is right"; and a spirit of greed, injustice, and oppression ruled the nations. The Church, the one power that might have opposed this, was often found on the side of the feudal lords, and secular force ruled in place of spiritual authority. We have seen the utter failure of the Popes to stem the tide; and yet, even before the tenth century was out, it had begun to flow back.

The first great impulse towards reform came from a monastery at Cluny, in Burgundy, where a few men, despairing of the condition of the society of their day, met together to live, under the reformed rule of St. Benedict, a life more in agreement with the early ages of Christianity. The movement began to spread. New abbeys arose, and during the years that followed "Rome herself looked on a long chain of stately monasteries rising like distant bulwarks of her power in every land which owned her spiritual rule." [1]

[1] Stephen, "Ecclesiastical Statesmen."

Enclosed within their convent walls, these reformed Benedictines were to bring about a vast change within the society they had left. They set up high ideals in place of destroying what was bad, for the spirit of St. Benedict was all for "service rather than destruction, for love rather than for strife."

From each of their communities went forth the same message—a message that preached the dignity of labour in place of the lust for wrecking and robbery, and that showed forth in practical form the necessity of work for the health of man's soul as well as for his body. But when this ideal had once been accepted and the din of arms was dying down, a new demand arose. The merging of Church and State had once been a necessary precaution against a common foe, but it led inevitably to a loss of high spiritual ideals. In a world where the Empire stood for material things, the Church must shake herself free if she would hold her place as the Kingdom of Christ. And so the reform that is chiefly connected with the name of Hildebrand came about as the result of an inward force; and a century that was weary of worldly ambition and deafened with the clash of swords was to demand it at his hands.

Such a reform, stretching, as it did, through every grade of society, affecting Pope as well as priest, Prince as well as peasant, called for a man of extraordinary personality to bring it about. It was no time for a shepherd who should persuade his wayward

lambs with gentle pressure of his staff. When the flock was composed of wild untamed stock harassed by savage beasts on every hand, the Church needed a pastor who knew how and when to strike hard blows, to show an inflexible front, to prove himself a man of steel, wielding a scourge rather than a crook. As a reformer, Hildebrand was great; but he was greater still in the effect that his own "gigantic character" was to leave upon the Europe not only of his own age, but for centuries to come.

THE MONK HILDEBRAND

CHAPTER II: *The Monk Hildebrand*

1020–1048

HILDEBRAND, the future Pope Gregory VII., was born into this world during the troubled years of the early part of the eleventh century, probably about the year 1020.

He was the son of a carpenter, who noted curious signs of power from a very early age in the growing boy. Even at his birth his parents seem to have possessed intuition of a character that was to set the world of Rome on fire, and to burn up the chaff of evil custom and wicked intentions; for they called him Hildebrand, the " fierce flame " that was to bring both fire and light upon the earth.

As with most great men, legends gather round his early years. Sparks spring from his clothing and fire plays about his boyish head. In his dream he sees flame issuing from his mouth and consuming the whole earth; and all through his life he was to be associated with this idea of flame and fire.

Other indications of his future were not lacking. His father, entering his workshop, finds the three-year-old child playing with the shavings of wood upon the ground, and wondering, sees that he has formed them

into words which read *Dominabor a mari usque ad mare*, "I will rule from sea to sea."

In those days there would not be wanting an opportunity for advancing the education of so promising a child. He was probably still a very young boy when he was sent to a monastery at Rome to be taught and trained for the priesthood. If he went there, as is likely, at the age of seven or eight, he would have heard of the visit of a noble Northman, then ruling England as part of a great Northern kingdom that extended from Scandinavia to the Channel shores. Canute was on pilgrimage to St. Peter's, as an expiation of the crimes of violence that had marked his earlier life, and arrived in time to see Pope John XIX. crown the Emperor Conrad in the great church. A less edifying spectacle would be that of the bands of armed men from Milan and Ravenna fighting for precedence within the sacred building, while Romans and Teutons hacked each other to pieces when they met in the streets outside.

This was not the only scandal of which the boy Hildebrand would be a witness as the years passed by. Monastery walls were not so thick, nor the pupils so closely guarded, but that there would filter in among them news of the election of a boy of twelve, the age of Hildebrand himself, as Pope, when John XIX. died.

Pope and future monk practically grew up together, and while Benedict VIII. used his growing powers to bring still blacker scandal than his predecessors upon

his high office, the boy Hildebrand was straining every nerve to fit himself for the work that lay before him. The nature of that work was vague at first; but as the boy heard of the corruption and vice which was degrading the men who held the office of St. Peter, his clear and vigorous mind, even in those days, must have begun to formulate some kind of ideal of reform.

His home of these early years was the monastery of St. Mary (the site of the present Church of St. Maria Aventinense), whose Abbot was Hildebrand's uncle. The house had been given to Odo, the great founder of Cluny, by a Roman noble, clear-sighted enough to see that from the direction of the reformed Benedictines must come the reform of Rome; and it became the abode of the famous Abbots of that order when they were on a visit to the Holy City.

Such men as these did not fail to note the eager, bright-eyed boy with his "flaming glance;" and Hildebrand was singled out for the highest educational career then obtainable. He was sent to the "Pontifical School," the School of Singers, where the most noble youths of Rome were taught by such learned men as Archbishop Lawrence, and were governed by John Gratian, the future Pope Gregory VI., a man of pure and upright character that stands in strong contrast to those of his predecessors. Yet, so far had any real standard of morality disappeared, that this man, held up as an example of learning and piety, was to commit unchallenged a glaring sin of simony.

The wretched Benedict had wearied of his office, and wished to return body and soul to the world. Money he yet needed, in spite of his persistent robberies, and forthwith he agreed to sell the Papacy to John Gratian for an immense sum. Gazing as he well might at the miserable condition of the city under the rule of Benedict, Gratian perhaps felt that as Pope Gregory VI. he might cover what was then hardly regarded as a sin by the reforms he brought about. For there was safety nowhere in Rome for soul or body, and pilgrims carried the tidings far and wide how, even at the very tomb of the Apostles, nobles waited sword in hand to snatch away the pious offerings laid upon the altars. Discipline had ceased to exist. The churches lay in ruins, and even the citizens feared to walk the streets of Rome.

By himself the new Pope had not vigour enough to achieve great deeds. But he had appointed as his "capellanus," guardian of the chapel, or "chaplain," his most promising pupil, the young monk Hildebrand. To him was given the congenial task of cleansing the city from these scourges, and he performed it with unsparing hand. He earned thereby the hatred of all those who felt its pressure; but his thoroughness, though its fruits were but of a temporary nature, was to be remembered for good in the days to come.

Then came a crisis in affairs. Silvester, the seven-weeks Pope who had been elected during a brief revolt against Benedict, appeared again in Rome,

and Benedict himself was supported in an attempt to return by some of his followers. It seemed as though three Popes would hold their Court within the Holy City; and even the degraded moral instinct of the citizens rebelled against such a position. For the last seven years the Empire had been ruled by Henry III., who by his marriage with Agnes of Aquitaine had come into close touch with the congregation of Cluny with its ten thousand monks, its perfect discipline, its high ideals. For some time the eyes of the young Emperor had looked from Cluny to Rome, had seen the contrast and applied the moral. The deputation that asked him to decide between three Popes all clamouring for their right to the office gave him the opportunity for which he had longed. Silvester was deposed and retired to a monastery. Gregory VI. himself decided that he deserved to lose his office for his "shameful and simoniacal" act and went into voluntary exile. Benedict would not appear, and was formally deposed by a Council of Bishops and Lords in St. Peter's.

The question now was, Who should be the new Pope? The Emperor had no formal right to elect anyone, and said as much in plain terms to the Council of Roman Lords: "However foolishly I may have acted hitherto, I nevertheless concede to you the election of the Pope according to ancient usage."

But the Council cringed before the strong hand. "When the Royal Majesty is present," said they, "the

consent to a choice does not pertain to us. It belongs to your imperial power to furnish the Church with the arm of the defender."

The words, and still more the act, were momentous in the history of the time. A Pontiff chosen by the Emperor meant the subjugation of Papacy to Empire. The Pope would be the "Emperor's man," and the Church would become merely an arm of the State. The Romans looked on in grim silence as the German Suidger, Bishop of Bamberg, was consecrated as Pope Clement II., and immediately after the ceremony proceeded to crown Henry and his wife within the walls of St. Peter's. They saw the Emperor invested with the outward insignia of authority, the green robe, the ring, the golden diadem that represented the highest office in the Senate; and they knew that, unless a miracle should come to pass, the independence of the Holy See, together with that of the Holy City, had passed away.

But there was one present on that day who, looking deeper beneath the surface than these Lords of the Council, saw in this act a blow directed at the very heart of Christendom. The young monk Hildebrand had not spent in vain those years of his novitiate at Cluny before he returned to Rome as chaplain to Gregory VI. He had learnt there a high ideal of the priestly office, and had conceived an ideal of wide reform that might be brought about by a wise and powerful Pontiff.

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THE ABBEY OF CLUNY

The wild confusion in which he had found the city when he returned as Gregory's chaplain did not daunt him, though the sin of simony by which the Pope had obtained the office was shocking enough to one of his upright nature. His position, as we have seen, had given him some chance of promoting order within chaos, and now all this was ended by the exile of his master and the imperial election of a nonentity such as Clement II. Brooding sadly over the degradation that had come upon the Chair of Peter, he withdrew into exile with Gregory at Cologne.

During this period of enforced inaction, when his heart was longing on the one hand for the peace of his monastery, and yearning on the other over the desolation of Rome, the fame of the sermons preached by the young monk in his capacity as chaplain had reached the ears of the Emperor. Ever on the lookout for a man of unusual power, he travelled far to hear him, and declared that never had he heard the word of God preached with such earnestness and zeal. He went out of his way to show him marks of favour, and when Gregory died, early in 1048, he would gladly have kept Hildebrand at his Court. But the monk's eyes turned with longing to the walls of Cluny, and thither he journeyed, as soon as might be, for a few brief months of peace. And there we get a glimpse of him, painted by one Rainald, afterwards Archbishop of Lyons, who shows him welcomed by the Prior Hugh, the future Saint, his lifelong friend, bound to him by

the " thirst for justice " which was the distinguishing mark of both these men.

Just before his return to Cluny, Hildebrand would have heard of the death of Clement II., and have heard also of the rumour of a poisoned cup sent to him by the hand of Benedict. Then would have come the news that the deposed Pope had re-asserted his claims and was back in Rome again, backed by the influence and power of a certain Boniface, Marquis of Tuscany and Lord of the Castle of Canossa.

Here there steps for a moment upon the stage of history one, whose daughter, Matilda, the future Countess of Tuscany, was to play so important a part in the work of raising the position of the Papacy. At the moment it seemed, however, as though her family were on the side rather of misrule, for, by the aid of Boniface, Benedict for nine months ran riot in the city. But his career of wickedness was near its close. Wiser counsels prevailed with Boniface, who may well have been influenced by his beautiful Countess, Beatrice of Lorraine, and he refused any longer to support the ex-Pope against the Emperor. The wretched Benedict disappeared into outer darkness, while another nominee of the Emperor was placed, without even a show of election, upon the Chair of Peter. Three weeks later he was dead, poisoned probably by the friends of Benedict; and the Lords of Rome made humble appeal to Henry to choose for them once more a Pope.

THE STRUGGLE IS FORESHADOWED

CHAPTER III: *The Struggle is Foreshadowed*

THE sudden deaths of the last two Pontiffs had not increased the popularity of their office, and when the Romans reached the palace of the Black Emperor at Poldhe in Saxony, and asked him to find a new Pope, Henry found it no easy matter to fulfil their request.

Turning his eyes at length from Germany, the Emperor trusted to find in the kingdom of Lorraine one who should be suitable and willing to take up the office, and meantime called an Assembly at Worms to consider the question. Thither, amongst others, went the dark-eyed young monk from Cluny, his mind filled with the needs and sorrows of the Church; and thither also went Bruno, Bishop of Toul, whose saintly life had already won renown not only in his own Frankish diocese, but in Germany and Italy. It looks, however, as though even before their arrival the election of Bruno as Pope had already taken place, for the news met the latter, much to his dismay, and was reported to Hildebrand as having been the wish exclusively of the Emperor rather than of the representatives of the Church. Evidently the monk knew

nothing of what had actually taken place, of the scene of entreaties, refusals, and tears, as the Bishop besought the Council not to lay this burden upon him; nor could he have heard the words with which Bruno at length yielded to their importunities: "I will go to Rome, and if, of their own accord, its clergy and people choose to elect me for their Bishop, I will yield to your desire; but if not, I shall not regard myself as elected."

Knowing nothing of this, the monk was interrupted in a bitter meditation on the position of affairs by Bruno, who begged him to go with him to Rome. "I will not do so," flamed Hildebrand, "since you wish to take possession of the See of Rome by the power of Kings, and not by the choice of the Church."

"It is not so with me," declared Bruno, and told him of his declaration before the Council; upon which Hildebrand gladly consented to do all he could to help him.

But it was at his suggestion that, before he entered Rome, Bruno laid aside all outward signs of his dignity and entered Rome as a lowly pilgrim, barefoot, unattended save by the stern-faced young monk. He came to ask for election at the hands of the Roman clergy and people, and through this, and not by the will of the King, he claimed to hold the Holy Office.

This unanimous election of Bruno as Leo IX. was the beginning of the new era of reform for the Church. Popular in himself by reason of his saint-

liness and gracious presence, he was soon inspired by the energy of Hildebrand to a campaign against slackness, worldliness, and sin, that made itself felt far beyond the borders of Italy, France, and Germany. By his demand that Rome should assent to his election, he had cast contempt upon the imperial choice, and had thrown down the gauntlet in the struggle between Empire and Papacy; and inspired by the monk at his side, the strict spirit of Cluny began, little by little, to permeate the whole of his administration.

It is, however, in the character of Leo himself that we see the most remarkable development. Under the influence of Hildebrand he seems to have been transformed from a picturesque and graceful figure, noted chiefly for his piety and humility, to a militant Pontiff, ready, if need be, to use the sword as well as the Papal staff.

There steps upon the stage of history at this point a curious and romantic race of people, hailing from the Northern lands, from whence they had swarmed as pirates into France in the days of Rolf the Ganger. From thence they had sailed farther afield, and in search of adventure had touched the Mediterranean shores. Since their settlement on the bank of the Seine, they had been converted to Christianity, and it was whilst returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land that we first find them getting a foothold in Italy.

The kingdom of Sicily, long in the hands of the Greeks, had, during the ninth century, been conquered by hands of Saracen invaders from Northern Africa, against whom the Princes of the cities of the mainland, Capua Naples, Benevento, and the island city of Salerno, waged constant but ineffective warfare. To the aid of Salerno came the Normans, hot-foot for adventure, wrested it from the hands of the Saracens, and allied themselves against Greek and Saracen alike on the side of the city Princes.

In the early part of the tenth century the Norman Robert Guiscard had founded and settled a permanent city of his own not far from Naples: from the hands of Henry III. he and his followers had obtained large grants of land in the duchy of Benevento: and when Leo IX. became Pope the districts of Salerno, Calabria, and Benevento were ruled by Norman Princes.

This did not come about, however, without much ill-will on the part of the subject states. The Greek spirit of perfidy was rife among them, and a general massacre of their conquerors brought upon them the iron hand of the Norman. No doubt their revenge was ruthless enough in a ruthless age, and the gentle heart of Leo was wrung with pity when ambassadors arrived at his court whose sightless eyes and amputated limbs spoke eloquently of the treatment of their conquerors. He appealed to the Emperor, then to the rulers far and wide, to help him to free the land

from the "malice of the Normans." But as some feared their power, and others were well disposed towards them, none paid heed to the prayers of the Pope.

The urging of Hildebrand, and the memories of former days when, before he became priest, Bruno, as Count of Hapsburg, had been famous as a youthful warrior, led Pope Leo to raise an army on his own account and to proceed against the Normans on behalf of Benevento, which had been given over to him as fief by the Emperor. It was a hopeless task, for his loose array of freebooters was quickly outnumbered by the Norman troops, and the Pope, to avoid further slaughter, gave himself up into their hands. At once their fury turned to gentleness, and chieftains, stained with blood, knelt before him and offered him their service. Escorted by these great-hearted conquerors, the Pontiff returned to the gates of Benevento "with a mortal wound in his heart," and only left the city eight months later for his death-bed.

His defeat, curiously enough, with the subsequent action of his conquerors, had effected more than any conquest would have done; for it secured the alliance of a race of growing power and significance. By his grant to them of the territory claimed in Calabria and Sicily they became his "men"; and the loyal respect paid by them to the Papacy henceforth was to bear important fruit in the days of Gregory VII.

The April of 1054 saw the arrival of Leo in Rome, where his active life was to find its end. Broken in body by his ill-fated expedition, he bade them carry him to St. Peter's, in the choir of which, all prepared for a requiem, lay his own coffin. Stretching himself upon it, the Pope, worn out with ceaseless activities and an ardent struggle for reform, uttered the memorable words, "Of all my honours and dignities only this little dwelling remains"; and soon afterwards passed away in the fiftieth year of his age, to be revered by all later ages as a Saint.

At once all eyes turned to Hildebrand, now Archdeacon of the Roman Church, who had been combating heresy in France at the time of Leo's death. To his hands the dying Pope had committed the care of the Church, and both the clergy and people of Rome would have hailed his election to the Papacy. But Hildebrand's time had not yet come. Not until he could be freely elected would he accept the office, and that would never be in the lifetime of the Black Emperor.

Meantime his influence with Henry was strong enough to cause him to nominate whom he willed; and his choice fell upon the German Gebhardt, who was consecrated Pope as Victor II. in the year 1054.

It was during his pontificate that there comes across the life of Hildebrand the personality of one who was to play no unimportant part in his history, and whose own life is one of the most picturesque and romantic in this period.

The Struggle is Foreshadowed

The most powerful feudal lord of Italy during the past few years had been undoubtedly Boniface, Margrave of Tuscany. Entrenched within the triple walls of his famous castle of Canossa, he looked down from rocky heights upon the sunny plains of Lombardy on the north, and up to the wild ridges of the Apennines on the south; and thither he had brought in former years a noble bride named Beatrice of Lorraine, cousin to the Emperor Henry III. Of their three children only one, Matilda, survived, and she was but six years old when her father's death by assassination left his domain in the hands of his wife, Beatrice, and to his daughter after her death.

It was no light task for a woman to rule the turbulent cities of Tuscany, with tributary towns so far scattered as Modena and Mantua, Reggio and Lucca, Genoa and Nice. She was surrounded on all sides by warlike chieftains who were always on the lookout to seize her possessions; and she was, moreover, a woman of frail constitution, loving books rather than battles. Full though she was of a strong sense of duty both to her subjects and to the child whose inheritance she held in trust, she entirely lacked the vocation for a strong and ruthless ruler. But Beatrice had a powerful friend in her fellow-countryman Hildebrand, now Abbot of St. Paul's, the ruined church in Rome that he had of late restored to something of its ancient splendour.

Probably he had already made occasion, in his

busy life, to visit her and her husband in their rocky home, and had there made the acquaintance of the dark-eyed little maid Matilda, already described by one who knew her well as "a beautiful child of the royal race, yea, of the race of the masters of the world." Her father had taught her how to ride and fence almost as soon as she could walk alone; and her clever mother saw to it that she should speak German, French, and Provençal, as well as Italian. The saintly Anselm, Bishop of Lucca, had been specially commissioned by Hildebrand to teach the child both theology and Latin; yet with all this learning, the little Matilda grew up no bookworm, but a high-spirited, graceful maiden, full of vigour both of body and soul.

But Hildebrand was not always at hand to advise and control, and Beatrice, overwhelmed at length by the weight of her responsibilities determined to share them with one who should have the best of rights to aid her. Godfrey the Bold, her cousin, rode one day into the courtyard of the castle, and with the rough-and-ready love-making of the time, won her consent to be his wife. It was a rash deed, for Godfrey was under the ban of the Emperor for open revolt against his rule, had lost his estates, and was at that very time an exile from his native land of Lorraine.

The wrath of the Emperor at this union with his most powerful feudal vassal knew no bounds. Had not the brigand Duke defied his authority? Had he

not, in a fit of rage with a Bishop who supported the Emperor, burned down the Cathedral of Verdun? Let him not think that his speedy repentance and hasty reparation of the damage could blot out his deed of sacrilege! Let him, above all, be disabused of the idea that he could use the wealth and power of the Tuscan territories ruled by his wife according to his own will!

So, on the plea that Godfrey had forced Beatrice to marry him against her will, the Black Emperor descended upon Canossa with his army, intent upon driving his recalcitrant vassal out of Italy.

Nothing would have pleased Godfrey better than to decide the matter at the sword's point, but the gentler counsels of Beatrice prevailed. At her entreaty he sent a letter to the Emperor's camp, stating his case in frank and manly words:

"As a banished man despoiled of my possessions, I should surely be excused for having availed myself of the succour of a wife whom I obtained without fraud or violence, and whom I have wedded according to the rites of the Church."

"On his head be the bloodshed! Be it now fought out to the bitter end!" cried Godfrey, when the Emperor replied by marching still more rapidly upon the castle; but Beatrice had one more expedient at hand. Taking with her her wondering and deeply interested nine-year-old daughter, she went with a tiny escort to meet the grim Emperor at the Council

Chamber of War; and throwing back the veil from her beautiful face, she addressed him in spirited words:

"No unlawful thing have I done! My first husband being dead, I was alone in the world and lacking a man of arms to defend me and protect my child. I married him of my own free will. Is it justice that you should deny me the liberty that noble women have ever enjoyed?"

But the Emperor, lost in a nightmare of frustrated ambition, in which his baby son played an important part in connection with the wide-eyed little maid who looked so steadily upon him, turned a deaf ear to the lady's words. In vain his Council urged that she should be given a hearing and that justice should be done. Grim orders were given, and mother and daughter were seized as captives and sent to Germany to await the Emperor's will. It was hopeless to struggle further against his iron determination, and Godfrey, reft of the authority afforded by his wife, fled to Flanders to join the rebels who were in force there, and to await a turn of fortune's wheel.

That year of dull captivity in an alien land bit deeply into the heart of the small Matilda; and from this time dates her hatred for all things German and imperial.

In this encounter neither Pope Victor nor Abbot Hildebrand had taken part. There were big things afoot at the moment, and the Church had no wish to quarrel with Henry at a time when it seemed possible

to get him to return to the former a great part of the property of which she had been robbed. By Hildebrand's influence not only was this accomplished, but also a great movement of reform in Church and State was set afoot in Northern and Central Italy. When Pope and Emperor could work together hand-in-hand, much could be accomplished, and in comparison with the welfare of many souls, the captivity of a single vassal counted for little.

CHECK TO THE EMPEROR

CHAPTER IV: *Check to the Emperor*

1056–1073

IN the October of the next year, 1056, the death of Henry, the Black Emperor, put an end to his many schemes, and the imperial crown passed to a child of seven years old.

"Woe to the land whose King is a child," says the mediæval proverb; and the condition of the Empire in those days might indeed bode ill for ruler and ruled. In the East, where the imperial army had just met with a grave defeat, a war still raged; in the West the air was full of revolt, and Godfrey of Lorraine had openly joined Count Baldwin of Flanders in rebellion. Almost the whole of Italy was violently fermenting against the growing demands of the Normans, whose troops of freebooters bade fair ere long to take and to keep the upper hand in many Italian towns and provinces.

An unscrupulous Pope might have seized the chance of shaking off the imperial sway and holding free rule in Rome; but Victor, true to the trust imposed upon him by the late Emperor, made it his first care to see that fealty was paid by the nobles to the boy Henry when he crowned him at Aix-la-Chapelle. His mother, the Empress Agnes, then claimed her right

of up-bringing, and for the next few years, by her foolish indulgence of his caprices, bade fair to ruin his future life.

This was by no means in accordance with the wishes of the late Emperor, who had named Hanno, Archbishop of Cologne, to be Prime Minister and guardian of his son; but it was not till the boy was ten years old that this wise Prelate, once a knight-at-arms, could get him under his authority. And then it was too late, and the strict discipline given him in place of lax indulgence only served to fret a haughty and sullen spirit, and to turn him against all that was right and good.

When, at Hanno's wish, the rugged Saxon Princes were induced to lay aside their hatred of imperial rule, to visit the boy King and to renew their feudal vows, the child looked sullenly over their heads and turned a deaf ear to their rugged speech. They departed in high dudgeon, and the boy, severely reproved by his guardian, only conceived for them the deep-rooted prejudice against a part of his Empire that was to last his life. It was, however, during these years when Agnes held her weak sway, that Pope Victor was doing his best to win for the young Henry the support instead of the antagonism of the powerful House of Lorraine and Tuscany; and it was almost certainly by Hildebrand's counsel that steps were at once taken to put an end to the feud. Duke Godfrey was recalled from exile and restored

to his wife at Canossa, where both Victor II. and Abbot Hildebrand became frequent visitors; and to him who had once been a firebrand was given a title which marks him as the foremost layman of his age. "I am Duke Godfrey," he could say with pride, "Standard-bearer of the Romans, Patricius of Rome, Marquis of Italy, Prefect of Ancona, and Marquis of Pisa."

To Canossa came other visitors of distinction in those days, and amongst them four at least were to wear the tripie crown. Gerard, the stately and learned Bishop of Florence, soon to be Pope Nicholas II.; Anselm, Bishop of Lucca, the future Alexander II., who had baptised the child Matilda, were frequent guests; and thither also came another Anselm, the young and saintly pupil of Lanfranc, the scholar monk, and the future Archbishop of Canterbury. But those whom the maid Matilda, future Countess of this vast estate, loved and revered the most were the quiet, dark-eyed monk Hildebrand, always her close friend and object of her girlish reverence and affection; and her uncle, Frederick of Lorraine, Abbot of the famous Benedictine monastery on Monte Cassino.

They were persons of character, those men and women of Lorraine, and this brother of Count Godfrey was no exception to the rule. He was a scholar in an unlearned age, and withal a man of tact and energy. We find him acting as Chancellor of the Apostolic

See, and as ambassador to the East in the embassy which saw in its outcome the Great Schism of the Eastern Church. It was on his return, bearing with him rich treasure, that Henry III., fearing lest the money should fall into the hands of the rebel Godfrey, wrote to Pope Leo his peremptory command that Frederick should be seized and sent to him in bonds.

This move was promptly checkmated, for the princely ambassador chose instead to throw off his fine robes and become a humble monk at Monte Cassino, which thus became the recipient of his wealth. Soon after the death of the Emperor, Frederick was elected Abbot of the great Benedictine Abbey, at the same time that Pope Victor consecrated him as Cardinal-priest of St. Chrysogonus at Rome.

His entry into the Holy City as Cardinal and Abbot was marked by the highest honours. Clad in cope and mitre, and riding on a great white horse, he rode before a distinguished body of noblemen, decked in all the colour and dignity that Rome knows so well how to supply. In front of his horse walked white-clad boys, carrying flowers and palms and calling out his name, to which the choir who followed responded, "St. Peter has chosen you."

At the entrance of the church the choristers clustered round him, and their leader again intoned his name. To this the choir thrice replied, "May God preserve you! Holy Mary help you! Holy Michael help you!"

Hardly were these ceremonies completed when the news reached Rome that Pope Victor was dead at Arezzo. The usual uproar followed in the city, where the name of Hildebrand was freely used; but he was away in Tuscany, and the Roman people were determined not to wait, lest their chance of free election be torn from them. So, with no reference whatever to the Empress or her young son, Abbot Frederick, the idol of the moment, was taken by force from his monastery, hurried to the Church of St. Peter ad Vincula, and there elected Pope as Stephen IX.

This union of the powerful House of Lorraine and Tuscany with the Papacy in the person of Frederick commended itself highly to Hildebrand, the Pope-maker, who, from his Tuscan fastnesses, had been closely scanning the trend of events. A distinct blow had been struck for the Papacy against the Empire, and the new Pope was certain to use his power well. He began by selecting Hildebrand for the delicate task of announcing his election to the imperial Court, and this he carried out with "such eloquence and sacred learning" that no shadow of storm arose. The energy of the new Pope, and of Hildebrand, ever at his right hand, could be employed in reforming the abuses of which the age was full. One of the means towards this is significant. The monk Peter Damian, one of the most famous reformers of that day, and a veritable scourge of

wrong-doers, had raised his voice incessantly for years against the evils of selling and buying Church privileges and against the marriage of the clergy. Him the Pope now made Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia, so much against his will that Frederick had literally to force the ring upon his finger and the crozier into his hand. But in this position his fearless voice could be heard to more effect, and we find him losing no time in warning his brethren of his views on his new dignity.

"In these evil times," says Peter Damian, "the Holy Roman Church is the only harbour, and it is the net of the poor Fisherman which alone is able to gather together those who are boldly struggling against the angry waves and to bring them safely to shore. . . . And since from all parts of the world crowds flock to the Lateran, there should be conspicuous there, more than in any place, irreproachable morals, exemplary lives, and strict discipline. . . . What makes a Bishop is a good life and an unceasing effort to acquire the virtues of his state, and not turret-like headgear made of foreign skins, nor gaudy marten furs worn beneath the chin, nor jingling golden bangles, nor companies of soldiers, nor high-spirited and prancing chargers."

Meantime, Pope Stephen, never a man of strong health, knew that his work must be done quickly. The Norman inroads, their utter lawlessness and the state of friction they caused throughout Italy, weighed

heavily on his soul. The Empress and the young Henry were helpless in the matter; it needed great wealth and vast power to carry through an enterprise against them. A rumour arose that he intended to bestow the imperial crown upon his brother, Godfrey of Lorraine and Tuscany, and to use for the purpose of a war against the Normans the vast treasures he had given to Monte Cassino. That he actually sent for this treasure is true, but the humble submission of the monks seems so to have touched him that he returned the whole untouched. It was not for him to carry out such a project. Knowing that the day of his death was nigh at hand, he sent, not for the fiery Hildebrand, though he was much in his mind, but for the saintly Hugh, Abbot of Cluny, of whom he was wont to say that the devil went out when Hugh came in; and in his arms he died (March, 1058). But before he died he extracted a promise from the Roman clergy and people that they would elect no one until Archdeacon Hildebrand could return to Rome.

Scarcely had he breathed his last when the turbulent Counts of Tusculum, always on the watch to assert their rights, threw over all promises, and secretly elected a Tuscan noble, Cardinal John Mincius, as Benedict X. The imperial party promptly sent word to the Empress, leaving the election in her hands, and Hildebrand, hearing of this, obtained her leave to act. At Florence he secured the co-

operation of the ever-powerful Godfrey, and being joined there by the Bishops who had fled from Rome, chose Archbishop Gerard, a Burgundian, as Pope Nicholas II. By the time they reached Rome, the Roman factions were fighting one another, and the troops of Godfrey completed their rout. Benedict fled, and the Archdeacon and the Tuscan Prince brought in Pope Nicholas in safety.

The whole incident is important, for it marks the transference of the election from the Counts of Tusculum, and from the Empire itself, to the powerful Counts of Tuscany led by Hildebrand. Moreover, it was sealed by Hildebrand's next step, for he proceeded to make a treaty with the Normans, and to turn their weapons against the fortress where Benedict had taken refuge. Cursing the Roman people, who had made him Pope against his will, Benedict appeared upon the wall and promised to abdicate on condition that his life was safe. The pledge was given; but he was dragged from his next refuge in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, and brought before a council in the Lateran; then his pontifical robes were stripped from him, and he was forced to sign a confession of wrongdoings drawn up by Hildebrand before he was permitted to retire within the walls of the Monastery of St. Agnes.

It was again one of those measures that were necessary in a fierce age, when gentle shepherding would have been of no avail; and it left the position of the

Papacy on a higher level than it had known for many a year. At a Council held in the following year it was enacted that on the death of a Pope the Cardinal-Bishops should meet to nominate a successor; they should then summon the Cardinal-priests to vote upon their choice; and lastly, the people should be allowed to give their consent. It was the first clear foreshadowing of the supremacy of Pope over Emperor; and throughout its arrangement we see the hand of Hildebrand, who signs it simply as "monk and sub-deacon of the Roman Church."

It was clear, however, that this was but the beginning of a long struggle; and the next step was of almost equal importance. By Hildebrand's advice, the new Pope made a treaty with the Normans, by which means these turbulent chieftains were granted their lands as fiefs of the Holy See, and became for a time the firm supporters of the Church against both the Empire and the anti-Papal and imperial party in Rome.

Two years later (July, 1061), the death of Nicholas tested the stability of these arrangements. A strong anti-reform party was sent to young King Henry, beseeching him to choose them a Pope from the priestly nobles of Lombardy, and thus to overthrow the plans of Hildebrand the Pope-maker.

The answer of Hildebrand was to assemble the Cardinals and to elect Anselm, Bishop of Lucca, the pupil of Lanfranc of Bec, a Lombard, but a reformer

and a saint, as Pope Alexander II. We have seen him at Canossa, and known him already as the instructor of the daughter of that princely house, now a fair child of fifteen summers; he was, moreover, an old and valued friend of the Empress Agnes. A crowd of monks, carrying gourds on their left side and sacks on their right, carried the newly elected Pope from the church, and the crowd which looked on cried in contempt, "Away, lepers! Rag-bags!" But Robert Guiscard was there, with his Normans armed to the teeth, and the sympathisers with the imperialists found it wiser to disperse.

Stormy days, however, were at hand. The Empress, though she had approved of Anselm as Bishop of Lucca, would not tolerate his election as Pope without her sanction.

By her commission Benzo, Bishop of Albi, appeared in Rome as the coarse-mouthed and bitter opponent of Hildebrand and Alexander, and as the supporter of an anti-Pope, Cadalous, who had been hastily elected by the boy King at the instigation of his mother. Thus was Christendom faced again with the spectacle of two Popes, one representing the Roman Church and living in Rome; the other representing the Empire and living in Lombardy.

In spite of this opposition, however, Pope Alexander under the guidance of Hildebrand, now Chancellor of Holy Church, and supported by Robert the Norman and by the great religious houses of Cluny and Monte

Cassino, was soon firmly seated upon the Papal throne. Much of his success was due to the prompt and plucky action of Matilda of Tuscany, who, though but a girl of fifteen, put herself at the head of a band of retainers and threw back the imperial forces who had come to support the anti-Pope. In her zeal for the support of the Papal throne this brave maiden performed a far greater act of self-sacrifice; and to make sure of an ally, allowed herself to be betrothed to the hunch-backed son of her stepfather, Godfrey of Lorraine. Thus, with the aid of " Le Bossu " and his followers, the usurper Cadalous was driven with contumely from the walls of Rome. And within a few days Godfrey of Lotharingia, " Le Bossu," had left his girl-wife for ever and returned to his own country.

" He brought back the Church, so long a servant of the State, to her former condition of freedom."

Such was the verdict of history on Pope Alexander II., but the real cause of his success was the support afforded him by the monks of the Church of that day. As usual they looked to Hildebrand for their cue, and Hildebrand, now Chancellor of the Holy Roman Church, was the Pope's right hand. With fiery zeal the monasteries increased their austerities and devotion, if only as a protest against the slackness of the secular clergy. When the monks of Vallombrosa hotly opposed the election of Peter, Bishop of Pavia, who had openly bought his See, they were attacked by his men-at-arms, beaten, robbed, and sorely

wounded. Duke Godfrey of Tuscany threatened to exterminate them; false accusers blackened their reputation at Rome.

But Hildebrand stood quietly but firmly as their supporter, and encouraged by him, one of them, the monk Peter, before a great concourse of the Florentines, passed through the ordeal by fire in order to prove the guilt of the Bishop. He emerged unscathed from the blazing pile, and the Florentines, always impressed by courageous zeal, declared themselves on the side of the monks.

The Bishop himself, deposed and penitent, became their convert and entered the monastery of Vallombrosa; and Pope Alexander did not fail to point the moral by appointing the monk "Peter of the Fire,"[1] as Bishop of Albano and a future Cardinal.

When Cluny was persecuted by a jealous and worldly Bishop, the Holy Father, by Hildebrand's advice, at once declared the monastery to be free from all episcopal interference or excommunication, a "haven of salvation and mercy" for all distressed in soul or body.

To Monte Cassino, the great Benedictine monastery, the same privileges were given "under the tutelar freedom of Rome," and the Pope himself dedicated the vast new church in the presence of Archbishops, Bishops, Princes, and nobles, and of an immense crowd which extended over the whole mountain and the

[1] St. Peter Igneus.

fields on either side, and yet was accorded food and lodging by the generosity of the monastery.

Special honour was paid to learned monks such as our own Lanfranc, the monk of Bec, who, when consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury, was summoned by Hildebrand to receive the *pallium*, or emblem of office, at the hands of the Pope.

When he drew near the Papal Seat, Alexander rose and went to meet him with outstretched hands, saying: "It is not because he is an Archbishop that I rise, but because at the Abbey of Bec I sat at his feet with the other scholars."

It was while Hanno, Archbishop of Cologne, was absent in Rome at the coronation of Alexander that the young Henry fell under the influence of the witty and wicked Adalbert, Bishop of Bremen, and thenceforth took up his abode in the licentious atmosphere of his palace. Adalbert soon managed to get the organisation of the kingdom into his hands, for he ignored the claims of the Empress, and held complete, though inconspicuous, control over the incurably irresponsible nature of the youth himself. Agnes, having cast herself as a penitent at the feet of the Pope whose election she had opposed, entered a convent and died there some fifteen years later.

During the last days of Pope Alexander, friend and immediate predecessor of Hildebrand, the mutter of distant thunder was heard from Germany, where Henry IV., now a self-willed tyrant, swayed only by

his own passions, was driving the Saxons to open revolt, estranging most of Germany, and scandalising Christendom by his avowed intention of putting away his young wife Bertha, for whom he had conceived a perfectly groundless aversion.

This last ill deed was prevented by the fiery threats of Peter Damian, who warned him that the Pope would, if he persisted, refuse him the imperial crown; but this left bitter resentment in Henry's heart, and when Alexander called him to his presence, he refused sullenly to appear.

Before the matter could be pursued further, Alexander had breathed his last.

HILDEBRAND ELECTED POPE

CHAPTER V: *Hildebrand elected Pope*

1073–1075

IN those days the death of a Pope was generally the signal for an outburst of warlike feeling between the parties in Rome; and it was to prevent this unseemly uproar in electing the successor of Alexander that Hildebrand the Archdeacon caused the walls, gates, and bridges of the city to be occupied by soldiers who could be trusted to stand for the Papal cause. It seemed, indeed, as though these precautions were unnecessary, for the people, owing to that curious awe and respect with which Hildebrand used to inspire even his enemies, "against their wont kept quiet, and left the reins of affairs in his hands." But that did not imply that they did not mean to assert their will at the due time. In the midst of the great Church of St. John Lateran, the funeral ceremonies were at their height when a great cry arose from the vast crowd within and without the walls:

"Let Hildebrand be Bishop! Let Hildebrand be Pope!" At that cry the dark face of the monk of Cluny turned pale, and he strove with uplifted hand to

stay the voices of that surging throng. But before he could reach the *ambo*, or pulpit, and speak to them, a Cardinal sprang up before him and cried out:

"My brethren, it is well known that from the days of Pope Leo, the Holy Roman Church has been exalted and the city freed by the hands of Hildebrand. What better Pope can we have than Hildebrand, who has received sacred orders in our midst, and who is so well known to all of us who now elect him as our head?"

And once more the roar went up to the roof of the great church:

"St. Peter has made choice of Hildebrand!"

Weary with the strain of a death-bed vigil, full of doubts as to his own powers and want of confidence in his ability to carry out the great schemes he had so ably planned, Hildebrand shrank back from all this acclamation with most real dismay. But to his expostulations the Cardinals turned a deaf ear. The red cope was flung around his shoulders, the Papal mitre pressed upon his head, and he was hurried away to the Church of St. Peter ad Vincula to be enthroned.

This was on the 22nd of April, 1073, and, as the official document now in the archives of the Lateran goes on to say—

"In order that the Church of God might not long remain in grief, we chose Archdeacon Hildebrand, whom now and henceforth we wish to be called Gregory, Pope and Apostle . . . a religious man, distinguished for his learning both sacred and pro-

fane, most remarkable for his love of equity and justice, strong in adversity, but temperate in prosperity."

And meantime the weak body of the new Pope had broken down under the stress of new responsibilities and new anxieties for the future, and Hildebrand tossed in fever on his bed. "Unwilling I board the ship of Peter. 'Tis a heavy burden I am forced to shoulder," he moans in his letters to his friends. "Pray for me, pray for me; your prayers are my one necessity."

But if his enemies thought him crushed beneath the load of office, they were soon to see their mistake. Rising from his bed of sickness with a flaming sword in his hand, the new Pope, Gregory VII., as he must henceforth be called, went forth to carry out his great work of reform.

First, however, he, who was still but a deacon, must be ordained priest and solemnly consecrated as Pope. To Henry of Germany was given an opportunity to be present, or at least to send representatives to this ceremony. But Henry, though he was so enraged that this open opponent of his claims over the Church should be elected as its head that he would not recognise his election, did not feel the moment a safe one to oppose him face to face; and so took no notice of the invitation to be present.

His own particular friends crowded to his support, however, and after the last Sunday in June, when the

new Pope was consecrated in St. Peter's, there came words of strong encouragement from those who looked to Hildebrand as the champion of the Church.

"God shows mercy to His people," wrote one, "when He sets at their head one whose life will serve them as an example."

"If the Church lead not the way back to justice," cried St. Peter Damian, the fiery monk who had been so ready to scourge the sins of Christendom, "the whole world will assuredly remain sunk in its miserable errors."

"One and all long now to hear great things of you."

It was with words such as these ringing in his ears that the new Pope found himself face to face with a world sunk in evil and sorely in need of reform.

The lay ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, whose sway extended, nominally at least, over the whole Western world, with the exception of France, Spain, and Britain, was a flippant youth of twenty-three, whose only guide was his own capricious will.

With his irresponsibility Henry IV. managed to combine a violent jealousy of anyone who was more capable than himself of adjusting the many difficulties of his rule, so that it was said of him with truth: "That he might be lord of all, he would not have another lord live in his kingdom." Such a ruler as this, "intelligent, but violent, unstable and immoral in his tastes," was one of the chief obstacles in the way of reform.

Elsewhere in Europe matters were not much better. France was ruled by Philip I., a King so weak and unmanly that his nobles openly derided his authority, and spent their energies in waging war upon one another and in oppressing the poor.

Spain, too, was torn at this time by internal conflict between Christian and Moor, and though an atmosphere of romance is thrown over her story by the doings of that strange hero, the Cid, there was to be found within her borders neither justice nor safety for man, woman, or child.

Over the great Eastern Empire the darkness of an alien faith was settling, when the Turks, having crushed the Byzantine power in the great battle of Manzikert (1071), began to destroy the Christians of the East, who had so lately broken away from the rule of Rome "both spiritually and temporally." But for these, since they had thrown off his rule, Gregory could do nothing.

The only bright spot in those days, curiously enough, was our own land of Britain, where, though a vanquished people might groan under the rule of a conqueror, William the Norman, they were nevertheless governed by one who loved justice as much as his life-long friend, Hildebrand himself.

More serious than the shortcomings of the rulers was the utter failure of the Bishops of Christendom to uphold any kind of standard of religion. Slackness, injustice, love of money, self-indulgence were plainly

to be seen on every hand; so that Gregory was well justified in declaring that the Church had become the "worthless bondwoman of the Kings of the earth." But that very description proved that he had already diagnosed the disease and decided upon its cure.

Before all things the Church must be free: free in her elections of Bishops; free from dependence on worldly rulers for her maintenance; free, above all, from those shackles of self-indulgence that were lowering her in the eyes of Europe.

This freedom, then, became the burning desire, the life-long aim of Pope Gregory; and in order to bring this about, his own position as Head and Father of the Catholic Church had first to be defined and safeguarded. It was this that brought him into conflict with Henry IV., whose aim had been to "make the Church his bondwoman," and so to set on foot that great struggle between Church and King, between priesthood and Empire, that was to be the story of his life as Pope.

But this was to be no mere struggle for power. It was to Gregory the only means of improving the condition of his countless children, both as regards this world and the next. Neither Kings nor Bishops could be counted on as instruments of reform, but on his side he held the monks, so long neglected by their Bishops, the priests, some few Princes who held their office as a sacred charge rather than as a means

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PHILIP I OF FRANCE

of money-getting, and, what is more striking, almost the whole mass of the people at large, and especially the poor, whose eyes, unclouded by selfish aims, could recognise in him the great-hearted Father of Christendom.

One of the first problems that Gregory had to solve was that of the relations between the invading Normans and the Holy See.

We know already how Robert Guiscard, their leader, had been gradually encroaching upon the lands of Southern Italy, and how at present he had his eyes fixed upon the flourishing towns of Salerno, Capua, and Benevento. He had, it is true, given a loose kind of promise that he would "serve the Pope faithfully"; but in practice he was increasing his armed followers, advancing little by little, and earning for himself a lurid reputation for greed and lust of conquest.

Now the ruler of Capua, Richard by name, was himself a Norman, and in the hope of playing off one against the other, Gregory obtained an oath of fidelity from him, by which he promised not only to pay rent for the Church lands held by him, but to do all he could to recover the other possessions of the Holy See. By his aid, and that of Beatrice and Matilda of Tuscany, and Gisulf of Salerno, he hoped to hold the wily Norman in check; but here he found himself entirely mistaken. With his brother, Roger of Sicily, by his side, Guiscard fell suddenly upon the

land around Capua, and left them ravaged within a very few weeks.

It was while Gregory was thinking out a plan for checkmating this powerful foe that the idea came to him of a great crusade that was to have a twofold aim.

It was suggested, first and foremost, by the terrible afflictions which the Christians of Asia Minor were enduring at the hands of the conquering Turks. Thousands of them had been massacred "like beasts of the field," and those who survived were sending piteous appeals for help to the Pope whom their own priests had rejected.

To the outer world, Gregory seemed a man of iron. It was events such as these that brought out the almost womanly sympathy and pity of his nature.

"I would rather," he declared, "lay down my life for these poor people, than neglect them in order to have the whole world submissive to my will."

If, however, it were possible to raise a great crusading army to free the oppressed from the hand of the Turk, his powerful mind promptly grasped the fact that in such an army lay the weapon he needed to keep the Normans in check. Nay, if such an army were joined, as it well might be, by all the great nobles of France, Spain, and Italy, it was impossible that the war-loving Normans would stand aloof; and hence would appear the path by which an allied Europe might march to victory under the banner of the Church.

The summons was made in terms that would appeal to the hearts of men in the Great War of the twentieth century as much as it should have done in those days.

"We ought, if we love God," writes Gregory, "to be overwhelmed with grief at the terrible slaughter of Christian men. But we must do more than grieve; the example of our Redeemer must move us to sacrifice our lives for them. We urge you, then, in the name of Christ and by the authority of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, to let the wounds and blood of your brethren and the dire peril of the (Eastern) Empire, stir up your sympathy so that you may bear help to your brethren."

It seemed, however, that Europe, torn with her own petty strifes and quite unawakened as yet by the spirit of romance and chivalry, was not prepared to take up a crusade. Such a movement would have done much to shake off old fetters, to purify and ennoble, as Gregory well knew. But it seemed as though that door was closed against him, and meantime the Norman, at his pleasure and in defiance of excommunication, was pillaging, destroying, invading. Only from one quarter was help forthcoming, when Beatrice of Tuscany, stirred by the ardent courage of her daughter Matilda, raised an army to "force the enemy to restore what he had taken from the Prince of the Apostles."

The expedition was a failure, owing to the bad faith and disloyalty of the men of Pisa, and once

again anxiety and overstrain laid the weak body of the Pope upon a bed of sickness. Yet, far from losing heart, he rose up after nearly three months of pain and weakness, determined to make new attempts both to aid the tottering Empire of the East and to subdue the truculent Guiscard. The latter, indeed, with that rough chivalry so characteristic of the Norman, now professed himself to be as ready to fight on the side of Gregory as against him; but unfortunately he had already broken so many pledges of alliance that he was almost less dangerous as an open foe. The one and only method of holding him was to get him to join in some great enterprise against a common foe, and once more Gregory, stirred to the depths of his being by fresh representation of the miseries of the Eastern Empire, made a new effort to unite "all the faithful of St. Peter" against the Turks.

His aim was now to lead such an army in person, and knowing that in that case he must make sure of the support, even if it proved inactive, of one who was capable of using such an opportunity against him, he writes to the Emperor Henry in generous words that strive to make him his ally, or at least his supporter, in the great enterprise which he had at heart.

"Already," he says, "more than 50,000 men are arming themselves, and if they can have me as their priest and leader in the expedition, are ready to attack the enemies of God and under His guidance

to march even to the tomb of Our Lord. I am especially moved to this expedition because the Church of Constantinople, differing from us on the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, longs for reunion with the Apostolic See. Almost all the Armenians have fallen away from the Catholic faith; and most of the Orientals, in the midst of their diverse opinions, await the decision of the faith of the Apostle Peter. . . . But as great designs need great forethought and the help of the great, I shall turn to you for advice and support, if God gives me to make a beginning of this undertaking. For if, under God's favour, I shall go to the East, I shall entrust the care of the Roman Catholic Church to you, after God, to guard and defend it as your holy brother."

Such words, however, fell on deaf ears, and the high hopes of Gregory as to the rising of the selfish Princes of Europe in a holy cause came to naught, as far as an actual crusade was concerned. Yet who shall say that his stirring words and lofty ideals bore no fruit during the century that followed, and throughout the period that was to see that great outburst of chivalry on behalf of the freedom of the holy places of Christendom ?

THE CHRISTMAS MASS

CHAPTER VI: *The Christmas Mass*

1075

IT had been clear from the day that Hildebrand became Gregory VII. that direct conflict between Pope and Emperor was inevitable.

The Pope had done his best to work with Henry. As we have seen, he had tried to cultivate in him a sense of responsibility by naming him as his deputy if a crusade should call the Head of the Church to Palestine. He had scrupulously notified his election to the Emperor, and had openly announced his wish to approach him "with fraternal love, and to treat with him on what we believe of importance for the advantage of the Church and the honour of his royal dignity." But at the same time he warned him that not for his sake would he ever put aside the law of God, "nor for man's favour leave the path of right."

In one sense, indeed, the young Emperor seems to have personified the whole of the iniquitous system against which Gregory was setting himself as a wall against a flood. As a writer of the succeeding century tells us, "the Princes of this time imposed upon the

Church not the elect of God, but creatures of their own, that, after having chosen, they might the better humiliate them.

"The Church, from being mistress, became a servant. It was no longer the election of the clergy, the consent of nobles, the petition of nations, which determined the choice of Bishops. Neither holiness nor learning was sought for. The first-comer had only to present himself with his hands full of money, and he became a priest, not of God, but of Mammon—of that Prince of the world to whom Satan has said, 'I will give thee all if thou wilt bow down and worship me.' The dependants of monarchs constantly worked upon the pride and avarice of their masters, and showed them the more servility the more sure they were of arriving at the height of ecclesiastical dignity.

"This leprosy, springing from one polluted source, the Emperor, and passing through Pontiffs already corrupted, spread through the whole body of clergy.

"When a Bishop had bought his See for so many hundred marks, his next business, in order to fill his empty purse, was to sell to priests abbeys, provostships, archdeaconries, and parishes—and at the same time ordination to the clergy; while those who had acquired these things traded in their turn in the different offices of the Church, and even in burial-places, so as to reimburse themselves for the money they had advanced." [1]

[1] Reicherspers, quoted by Montalembert, "Monks of the West."

Of this terrible state of things an Emperor who lived only to satisfy his passions, who set his will above all authority, and whose private life was given over to the basest pleasures, was the living embodiment. And though at first the young King, hoping to buy the help of Gregory against the hated Saxons as he had bought so many other ecclesiastics, wrote smooth letters offering his aid in Church reform, it was not long before the mask was thrown aside.

At the Synod held by Gregory, in February, 1075, there at once came up the burning question of "investiture." In its boldest form, "lay investiture" meant the presentation, or more often the sale, of bishoprics or abbeys by lay rulers to ecclesiastics, who in consequence owed them certain rights in acknowledgment. When this custom increased, the natural result was that the Church became ruled almost entirely by the nobles, who openly sold ecclesiastical positions to the highest bidder. It was not to be wondered at, then, that men so appointed acted likewise. "They were laymen at heart and acted as such. They took to themselves wives, and thought more of them and of their families than they did of the work of God."

From Emperor to the humblest priest ran the stream of corruption, and it was to check its course that the Synod enacted: "If anyone shall from henceforth receive from the hand of any layman a bishopric or abbey, let him not be accounted a Bishop or an

abbot, and let no one treat him as such. We deprive him, moreover, of the grace of St. Peter and of the right of entry into the Church, until he should have given up the position he has secured by the sin of ambition and of disobedience, which is as the sin of idolatry. And if any Emperor, Duke, Marquis, Count, or any temporal lord shall presume to give investiture of any bishopric or of any ecclesiastical dignity, let him understand that he is bound by the same sentence."

This was plain speaking indeed; and the startled Henry, anxious as to the grant of the imperial crown, which Gregory had not yet accorded him, and still worried by the insurgent Saxons, at first pretended to be anxious for a " good understanding " with the Pope.

Two events, however, played into the King's hands. In June of that year he conquered the Saxons and received their submission, and almost at the same time the See of Milan, representing the Church of North Italy, led by Theobald, who had bought the archbishopric from Henry, defied the reforming hand of Gregory and declared itself on the side of the enemies of the Church.

The investiture of this man by Henry, as well as the appointment by the latter of two other Bishops, was an open challenge to the Pope; and it was promptly met by a letter of warning which began thus:

" Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to King

Henry, health and apostolic benediction, *if he yields to the Apostolic See that obedience which is due from a Christian King.*" In fatherly words he calls upon Henry to reflect, and to leave the company of those who have been excommunicated by the Church; and while promising to meet him half-way in the many difficulties raised by the edict against lay investiture, warns him not to attempt to interfere with the liberty of the Church. The letter ends with the message that in the beginning of the next year envoys should be sent to Henry who should demand in the name of Gregory that he should obey the Holy See, release the Saxon Bishops whom he had imprisoned, and reform his own private life.

Meantime, in the Christmas of that same year, 1075, events of an extraordinary character had taken place in Rome. Amongst those who bitterly resented Gregory's sweeping reforms was a certain robber baron named Cenci, one who held in his power both the strong castle of St. Angelo, and other forts in the Campagna and on St. Peter's Bridge.

From there he issued from time to time on errands of robbery and violence, and being at length found guilty of trying to obtain some part of the Papal lands by forgery, he would have been put to death had not Gregory, at the intercession of Matilda of Tuscany, forgiven him.

Yet this seemed only to increase his hatred of the Pope. Gathering round him the criminals of the

city, he formed a sort of "Cave of Adullam" out of those whose evil life caused them to dread the justice of Gregory, and with them he laid his plot.

The Vigil of Christmas of that year, 1075, was one to be always remembered in Rome. A storm of extraordinary violence was raging overhead. Roofs fell and houses were shattered by the force of the gale, and men and women, pale-faced and shaking with fear, whispered of presage of some dire event.

Upon the hill of the Esquiline the Pope sang Mass that morning, and inaugurated the Christmas festivities at the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore to a sadly attenuated congregation; and there were those watching the little assembly who muttered darkly that "if there were few to attend the Pope's Mass on Christmas Eve, there would be fewer still at the midnight ceremony."

As was the custom on this latter occasion, Gregory said his first Christmas Mass at the "altar of the Manger" containing the relic of the first cradle of Our Blessed Lord. Beyond the chapel the great church lay dark and empty of all but a few scattered figures, for the tiny congregation had clustered round the altar to receive from the Pope's hands the Body of their Lord. Suddenly the clash of arms rang through the church. There was a wild rush, and the gleam of torches which showed a band of ruffians armed to the teeth, whose bared swords were felling all those who stood in their path. Closing the

Tabernacle in haste, the Pope turned to face them, and was immediately struck by one who aimed at beheading him, but who only succeeded in inflicting a severe gash on the forehead.

In the next few seconds his vestments, all but his alb and stole, were torn from his back, he was hurried from the church, and bound behind one of his captors on the back of a plunging horse. Then through the black and howling darkness of the storm they rode to the Tower of Cenci, near the Church of St. Agnes, and imprisoned him, with a "certain man and a certain noble matron" who had clung closely to him throughout the raid, therein.

During this awful act of sacrilege and violence, Gregory had shown no resistance, but had given himself up, says the chronicler, "like a gentle lamb" to the fury of his enemies. Even within the thick stone walls of his prison he was not left in peace; for the sister of Cenci, unmoved by his pitiable condition of cold and wet and fast-bleeding wounds, reviled him with foul words till the lady, his fellow-prisoner, fearlessly bade her be silent, while meantime tenderly binding the bleeding head, and joining her companion in trying to warm the icy limbs of the Holy Father with their own garments.

Scarcely had the woman been silenced than Cenci himself rushed in, and standing with drawn sword over him, threatened him with torture and death if he did not at once deliver up to him the treasures of

the Church, with the castle of St. Angelo and other strongholds. But to him Gregory answered nothing. Meantime, the storm had stopped as though by magic, and the streaming streets were full of armed men searching for the vanished Pope. In the churches all the Masses had been stopped, and the altars stripped, while the air grew thick with the alarm of bells and the sound of trumpets.

Early that Christmas morning, as the people gathered, fearful and amazed at these happenings, in the Capitol, came word that Gregory, their beloved Father, was not dead, as had been whispered, but was a prisoner in the hands of Cenci. A roar of fury rose from the mob, and in the dim light of dawn there was a great rush to the gates of the fortress.

"Forgetful of himself, each man fought with all his might." Fire was laid to the walls, battering-rams were brought up, and just as one of the gang within was threatening to cut off the head of the Pope, a javelin hurled by one below pierced his throat and sent his body "quivering to the ground."

Then, seeing that his plot had failed and that immediate vengeance was at hand, Cenci once more played the part of penitent, and on his knees before Gregory implored his pardon and safeguard. In his love for souls and hope that this lost one might yet be saved, the Pope at once gave him pardon for his personal offence to himself, but for his open sin against the Church he refused forgiveness until he

had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The mob were howling for his blood, and it was with the utmost difficulty that Gregory succeeded in saving him from being torn to pieces; but the incredible thing is yet to be told. Untouched by the generosity of the man who had thus twice saved his life, Cenci retired to one of his castles in the Campagna, from whence he harried the lands of the Church and was a thorn in the side of Gregory until the last day of his ill-spent life. He was, it is obvious, the secret tool of Henry in all this matter.

Meantime, directly he was freed, the Pope bade them carry him, bloodstained as he was, to the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, and there he finished his Christmas Mass.

AN EXCOMMUNICATE KING

CHAPTER VII: *An Excommunicate King*

1075–1076

THE plot of the arch-ruffian Cenci was but the first act in the drama that was to be played out on the stage of history by Gregory the Pope and Henry the Emperor.

In the striking events that immediately followed, we must be clear as to the main point.

The one great aim of Gregory was the saving of men's souls, and to do this with any effect, certain reforms had to be brought about within the Church. Two of these were included in the third, and all three were very closely connected. The standard of morals, especially as regarded celibacy of the clergy, must be raised, but this could best be done by abolition of simony, or the buying and selling of clerical offices. Neither of these was possible unless the Church were absolutely free from lay control, since "without liberty there is no strength," and as Gregory himself wrote, "the priest who violates the laws of God out of regard for earthly authority is denying his faith."

The obstacle to these reforms was, in a manner of speaking, one man alone. If Henry IV. bowed his head to the Church's commands in the matter of "investiture," the rest of the reforms would follow. But to do so would be to give up a vast amount of power and authority, and this Henry was by no means prepared to do. He might indeed have temporised for a while, but he was already being met, in this January of 1076, with an uncompromising demand on the part of Gregory to reform his private life, to leave the society of those of his ill companions who had already been excommunicated, and to set free the Saxon Bishops whom he had unjustly imprisoned.

When the Emperor scoffed at these demands, the answer came very much to the point. Not on political grounds, but on those of his personal immorality, and his companionship with those upon whom the Church had set her ban, he must appear before the Pope, either as a penitent or to receive the sentence of excommunication.

Mad with rage to think that Gregory should dare thus to put him to open shame, the King called a meeting at Worms of those Bishops and Princes on whom he could rely, a meeting that was presided over by the excommunicated Cardinal Hugo Candidus, who was always such an evil influence upon Henry. Several Abbots of Lombardy, twenty-six Bishops, and many Princes appeared to support him, and the

elated young King, always ready to play a leading part in a dramatic situation, proceeded to denounce the Pope in no measured terms. An invalid election, a Christendom torn asunder, an office degraded, were but a few of these "tragic lies," and forthwith the meeting signed an agreement that for the future they would yield Gregory no obedience nor regard him as their Pope.

Well indeed might it be said by a writer of that day:[1]

"Behold the source of all the troubles we are enduring! Bishops decree that a servant of a King has a right to bid the supreme Pontiff come down from his episcopal seat!"

The difficulty now was to find anyone courageous enough to present this declaration of revolt to the Pope. At length a certain Canon, Roland of Parma, was prevailed upon to do so, and hastening to Rome, arrived there just before the great Synod of February, 1076. His first act was to send out broadcast the letter in which, as *patricius* of the Roman people, Henry called upon Bishops and laymen to depose "the monk Hildebrand" as the "oppressor of the Church, enemy of the Roman Republic and of the German peoples," and in which the King openly called upon Gregory to descend from the Papal Chair.

Nor was this all he dared to do.

At the opening of the Synod in the Lateran, before a

[1] Gibehard of Salzburg

vast assembly of Bishops, clergy, and laymen, Roland stepped forth in their midst and cried aloud:

"My lord the King, and all the Bishops beyond the Alps as well as those in Lombardy, bid you quit forthwith the See of Peter into which you have intruded yourself. No one has a right to this great honour save him who has received a mandate from the Bishops and the approval of the King."

Then turning to the clergy, he cried: "You, my brothers, are summoned to appear before the King on the Feast of Pentecost to receive from his hands a Pope and a Father. For this man is no Pope but a ravening wolf."

Scarcely had the words left his lips than Bishop John of Porto shouted in a voice of thunder: "Seize the traitor!" "Death to the insolent caitiff!" cried the rest, and a rush of men with drawn swords would soon have put an end to the messenger, had not Gregory flung himself before him and given him protection. When the assembly had quieted down, the Pope himself, with his thin lips tightened and his dark eyes very bright, ordered that the King's letter should be read aloud.

This remarkable document, addressed not to Gregory but to "Hildebrand, now no longer the *Apostolicus* but a false monk," proceeded to accuse the Pontiff of gaining the Apostolic See by "fraud, force, and gold," and commanded him, as one "condemned by all our Bishops," to come down and leave the

Apostolic Chair. "Let another mount the throne of Blessed Peter, who, under cover of religion, will not teach war." It ended with these words:

"I, Henry, by the Grace of God, King, with all our Bishops, say unto thee, damned for ever, Come down, come down, come down!"

To this there could be but one reply, and on the following day, by the wish of the Synod, Gregory passed a sentence of formal excommunication upon Henry, who "through unexampled pride, has rebelled against the Holy Church, and is forbidden the government of the whole realm of Germany and of Italy." All Christians were hereby absolved from the oaths they had taken to him, and from obedience to one who was hereby "bound by the bond of anathema." The Bishops who had supported Henry were likewise dealt with, being suspended from office until they should make satisfaction; and it is significant of the real hold Gregory had upon them that many of these, before the Council was over, had asked pardon of him and begged to be reconciled.

When the news of the excommunication of Henry was spread abroad, in the words of the historian of that day "the whole Roman world (*i.e.*, the Holy Roman Empire through Europe) trembled." Some, indeed, questioned the right of Popes to excommunicate Kings, and were briefly answered by Gregory:

"When God thrice entrusted this Church to Blessed Peter, did He except Kings? If anyone shall say

that he cannot be bound by the Church's bonds, let him remember that he cannot be loosed by its authority: and he who says this, separates himself wholly from Christ."

When Henry heard the news, he was beside himself with rage, and promptly issued orders that the Bishop of Toul, who had so lately declared Gregory deposed, should tell the people that the sentence was invalid. But Pibo of Toul fled from the Court rather than obey, and another, William of Utrecht, being forced to do so, died soon afterwards, possibly by his own hand, in despair of salvation. Rumours of a disquieting nature began to reach the King of a people aghast, Bishops hastening to be reconciled, Princes deserting his cause. In vain he called them to meet him in public assembly; the most important simply stayed away, and though a handful of frightened Bishops were prevailed upon to declare the sentences of Gregory as null and void, the decision was openly debated throughout the Empire.

Before long it became clear that the sentence of excommunication was bound to carry with it that of deposition.

One by one his supporters fell away, realising as they did that the election of Henry explicitly stated the condition that he should " act as a great King," and knowing, moreover, that by the law of the Empire a man under the sentence of excommunication should be " deprived of every dignity."

If any doubted the justice of such a sentence they were reassured by the clear and straightforward letters sent at this time by Gregory throughout the Empire to " all Bishops, Abbots and priests, to all the Dukes, Princes, and knights, and to all Christians who dwell in the Roman Empire, and really love the Christian faith and the honour of Blessed Peter." In these he showed plainly how every effort had been made by him to reform and reclaim the young King, who as he grew older had merely mocked at his endeavours.

When Gregory had been forced to excommunicate Bishops who had bought and sold churches, Henry had given them a welcome at Court; when he had been rebuked for his own evil life, his answer was to stir up the Bishops of Lombardy and many in Germany to be disloyal to the Holy See.

It was not the moment for Henry to feel able to defy for long such plain speaking as this. In Saxony, outraged, humiliated, oppressed by his cruel hand for the last seven years, was to be found a foe, savage and watchful, ready to take advantage at once of the Papal ban against their ruler.

Once, indeed, Gregory had made peace between them, promising the Saxons his protection for the future; but Henry's treatment of the leaders who had surrendered themselves to him, trusting to his honour for their future welfare, had been such that these men hailed with open joy the breach with the Pope, and escaped back to their own land.

Then at once there was a call to arms. The royal castles were seized, the King's forces driven out, and the people openly appealed to the Pope to save a "nearly ruined nation." First, however, an effort must be made by the Pope to save both the eternal soul and the temporal state of the excommunicated King. For even when he had most just cause for anger, the thought of revenge was far from Gregory's mind; and his heart yearned like that of a true spiritual father over the son who had sinned and must pay the penalty, but who, by due atonement, might win again his place of honour and esteem. It was in this spirit, rather than with any idea of asserting his own rights, that the Pope sent legates to the assembly called by the "great ones of the Empire," at Tribur, in October, 1076, to consider the case of a King who was outcast from Christendom.

JOURNEYS PERILOUS

CHAPTER VIII: *Journeys Perilous*

1076–1077

TO the Council held at Tribur came Princes, lay and clerical, from every part of the Empire, Princes who had long wearied of Henry's selfish dominion, and who were inclined to welcome the sentence of the Pope as an excuse for getting rid of him. The Saxons were strongly represented by their great fair-haired, rough-spoken rulers, supported by a warlike crowd of retainers, and these did not hesitate to urge the deposition of the King. Others spoke bitterly of the effect of the example of his immoral life upon the Empire, and reminded those who were inclined to generosity that his many promises of amendment had never shown a sign of fulfilment.

It was due to the influence of the Pope's representatives that Henry was not summarily deposed. They, indeed, were firm as to the need of some very patent signs of repentance and atonement, but they urged that he should be given these opportunities before the final blow fell. So it was agreed by an assembly that appears to have accepted without a question the right of Gregory to decide his case, that the Pope should be

invited to meet the Princes of the Empire at Augsburg on the Feast of the Purification in the next year (1077). If, by that time, Henry had refused to accept the conditions laid down meantime at Tribur, he was to be finally deposed. The conditions were these. He was to dismiss his excommunicated favourites together with his army, and live as a private person at Spires, there to await the coming of the Pope.

Across the river Rhine the King awaited in angry anxiety the outcome of the Assembly. "And what do I get in return?" he asked, writhing with fury when he heard of the terms laid down. "If you keep your promises," they told him sternly, "you shall receive the imperial crown. If not, you shall not even hold the title of King." But this was not all. In public the Church had been insulted in the person of the Vicar of Christ; and public apology must be made. Henry must send a circular letter to all the great ones of the Empire declaring his intention to "obey the Holy See and the Lord Pope Gregory who presides over it, and to make due satisfaction for any serious wrong done to him." Moreover, a letter of apology and submission must also be sent to the Pope direct.

To these conditions Henry hastily agreed, but the fatal facility of his promises no longer deceived those who knew him. "There was no pledge," said they, "to which they could bind him who had so often

promised before God to amend his ways, and who, as soon as the danger was passed, had broken through all his promises like cobwebs."

Deeds, not words, were now to be the test; and at Augsburg the final decision would be given; and knowing, as he did, the weight of adverse testimony, the strength of his Saxon adversaries, and his own want of will to reform, Henry might well dread the prospect of meeting those whom he had so deeply offended, or of winning forgiveness and rehabilitation from the Pope.

Meantime, however, he retired to Spires, " entering no church and transacting no public business." His faithful wife Bertha strove in vain to cheer him; he turned from her with open aversion, and became a prey to melancholy regret for the lost pleasures of his former state. To acknowledge himself in the wrong, to make restitution and to show real contrition for the past, never seems to have occurred to him; and, indeed, he had lived so long in self-indulgence and self-deception that it is doubtful whether such a course was now possible.

But he was always a clever actor, and he was prepared now to play the part of penitent, if by so doing he could hoodwink Gregory and so gain the imperial crown. The first step was to prevent the Pope from appearing at Augsburg—or, rather, to be beforehand by getting the ban of excommunication removed before the meeting was held. And in order

to pave the way to this he determined to call in the aid and sympathy of a woman.

Away in Tuscany, meantime, the young Countess Matilda had been called from the sick-bed of her mother, Beatrice, Henry's aunt, to that of the husband who had deserted her almost at the door of the church on their wedding-day. A determined opponent of the Pope, whom Matilda held in such veneration, Godfrey the Hunchback had brought nothing but grief to the heart of his young wife. Yet on his dying bed it was her words of holy comfort that softened him to real repentance and gave him once more eternal hope. He died in peace with the Pontiff, who wrote, after his death, in kindly words, " We will often recall his memory before God, for we have forgotten his hate and our resentment;" and Matilda hastened back to the death-bed of her mother, who lay at Pisa under the shadow of the Cathedral wherein was to be her tomb.

The last hours of Beatrice were overshadowed by the reports that came in on all sides of the mad career of her nephew Henry. In those days, before the Assembly of Tribur checked his course, many a prayer had been breathed by these brave and gentle relatives of his that the unhappy young King, for whom they alone seemed to have retained a real affection, might yet amend his ways before it was too late.

It may have seemed an answer to those prayers of her dead mother that Matilda received in the autumn

of that year, 1076, a letter from her cousin entreating her to intercede for him, and to win from the Holy Father indulgence and forgiveness. What her answer was we know not, but we can readily guess it to have been one of encouragement and hope, while at the same time she probably made it quite clear to the King that he must face the Assembly at Augsburg, towards which the Pope was even then preparing to wend his toilsome way.

But Henry had long ago forgotten how to act straightly. To him it seemed best to cross the Alps into Italy, to seek out Gregory, and possibly, with Matilda for intercessor, to win from him freedom and forgiveness before the meeting at Augsburg met to consider his evil deeds. So at the commencement of an unusually severe winter, he prepared for a journey that at the best of seasons was long, toilsome, and fraught with peril. In vain his wife pointed out to him the difficulties of travelling when the Rhine was already frozen over, and heavy falls of snow had rendered the mountain passes wellnigh impassable. To all this he turned a deaf ear, and seeing this was so, Bertha determined that, in view of the danger to health and safety that lay in front of her husband, her place was by his side. At first the King, with his usual rough speech towards her, refused; but suddenly bethinking himself that here was the making of a tragically dramatic appearance at the feet of Gregory, he not only agreed, but decided that with

them should travel his infant son Conrad, in whom he saw a valuable means of softening the displeasure of the Holy Father.

A few days before Christmas the little cavalcade left Spires, whose inhabitants looked on silently at the sad-faced Queen and the sullen King, who had lived among them as an outcast; and with pity on the little child who knew nothing of the tragic fortunes of his family.

In his fear of capture at the hands of his many foes, Henry determined to cross the Alps by the Jura route, and so came to Geneva by way of Vevey. Here he met his wife's mother, Adelaide, Countess of Turin, who rated him soundly for his treatment of her daughter and refused to give him passage through her territory. At last the pleadings of Bertha, reinforced by the promise of the King of five Burgundian bishoprics, hitherto retained by him for his own use, prevailed, and the little cavalcade, crossing the Rhone at Martigny, reached St. Maurice and began the ascent of the St. Bernard Pass.

"That winter," writes the historian of that day,[1] "was very severe; the mountains they must cross were nearly lost to view, and seemed to disappear in the clouds; the cold was intense, and there had been heavy falls of snow, so that neither men nor horses could advance in the narrow roads alongside precipices without running the greatest risks.

[1] Lambert (translation by A. H. Mathew).

"Nevertheless, they could not delay, for the anniversary of the King's excommunication was drawing near, and the King knew, according to the decision of the Princes, that if he were not absolved before this first anniversary, his cause would be irrevocably ruined, and that he would lose his kingdom. . . .

"Accordingly they enlisted the help of some peasants accustomed to the perilous passage of the Alps, who consented, on receipt of payment, to precede the King and his escort, and cut a passage for them along the edge of the precipices through the snow. By the help of these guides, and after surmounting the greatest difficulties and hardships, they reached the summit of the mountains; but it was impossible to advance further: glaciers covered the other side, which they had to descend, and how could they venture upon that polished surface?

"To escape this imminent danger the men were obliged either to crawl upon their hands and knees, or to be carried upon the shoulders of their guides, but even then they could not avoid a great many falls, and frequently rolled down the steep inclines. They only completed the descent after having thus many times risked their lives.

"As for the Queen and the women attached to her service, they were placed on a kind of sledge made of ox-hide, and the guides dragged them the whole way. Some of the horses were hauled along the pass by means of machines; others were dragged with their

feet tied; but many died, or were lamed, and very few reached their journey's end in safety."

It must have been with tears of joy that Bertha hailed the green slopes of the Valley of Aosta, and the olive-trees of Lombardy.

Then a strange reversal of affairs took place. Directly the Princes of Lombardy, always hostile to the Pope, heard of the arrival of Henry, believing him to have come for the overthrow of Gregory, they hastened to gather their retainers and to put themselves at his disposal. And Henry, though knowing well that with all Germany against him, he and the evil-living Bishops and nobles of Lombardy could not hope to prevail, yet threw dust into their eyes, and delayed their action by pretending that he was forcing Gregory to meet him face to face, and that after this encounter he would be ready to act with them " in quite ridding himself and his whole kingdom of so sacrilegious a man."

Meantime the Holy Father, equally bent on meeting Henry, though with a very different intention, and knowing nothing of his escape from Spires, had set out at the end of that December in the hope of reaching Augsburg in good time, and probably with the intention of seeing Henry beforehand in order to persuade him to submission. In that case the Diet of Augsburg would surely pave the way to peace and reconciliation between Church and Empire.

In that unsettled period, and in the depth of that

severe winter, such a journey was calculated to try the strongest frame, and the Cardinals, aware of Gregory's weak body, as well as of the ill-designs of his foes, implored him not to leave Rome. But he would not hear them, writing instead to the Princes of Germany in these words: "I, Pontiff, servant of the Prince of the Apostles, in opposition to the advice of the Romans, come unto you, trusting in the mercy of God and your own catholicity, ready to suffer death for the glory of God and your own salvation. For our consolation is, through much tribulation, to arrive at and to reach the Kingdom of Heaven."

One of those whose entreaties he was thus disregarding was Matilda, Countess of Tuscany, but in the end, though full of fears for his bodily welfare, she was yet brave enough to face the fact that he must do what he knew to be right, and was fain to content herself with sending a special cavalcade for his protection.

The first two hundred miles brought Gregory to Florence, where Matilda herself took command of her henchmen, and "attended the Papal progress." The worst part of the journey was to come, and as the party drew near Mantua, the excessive cold began to tell on the frame of the old man of sixty-four, whose body was weakened with ill-health and over-work.

"I will rest at Vercelli," he promised the anxious young Countess, who watched over him with all the reverent affection due to her spiritual father, and so

they drew near the city from which were visible the snow-covered peaks that barred their way to Germany.

Suddenly a rumour buzzed from mouth to mouth. Henry, it was said, was already at Reggio, and all Lombardy was rising on his behalf.

Fearing that this meant an attack upon the person of the Pontiff, the Countess entreated Gregory not to run a risk that might involve her cousin in graver sins of sacrilege, but to retire to her own castle of Canossa, that rampart against Germany which, " like a giant citadel of the Apennines, looked across the Lombard plain, over many a city, towards the misty Alps." [1]

To this Gregory reluctantly agreed, and was glad to greet within those massive walls his old friend and master, Hugh of Cluny, who had heard of all the trouble and was eager to intercede for the man whom he had known as an innocent child.

But the wrath of the Pontiff at Henry's new breach of faith had been well roused. Again and again had he offered Henry the opportunity of friendly interview, always to meet with the refusal of sullen silence. Now, he maintained, he must await the meeting at Augsburg as arranged, or give up hope of being released from the ban of excommunication.

[1] Mann, " Lives of the Popes."

CANOSSA

CHAPTER IX: *Canossa*

1077

IT would be well at this crisis of one of the most dramatic events of history to get a clearer idea of the scene in which it took place.

The famous castle of Canossa is described by a poet of that day[1] as a fortress "so strong that a few soldiers could defend it against a host; that a ten years' siege would not alarm it, for it was full of food, and was a mountain surrounded by walls; and that it feared no engine of war, nor the King himself."

To-day it is described by one who visited it during the last few years[2] as a deserted ruin. A marble column shows where once stood the beautiful mediaeval chapel, and the gateway known as the "Gate of Penitence" marks the spot where a royal penitent once begged for admission.

A few scattered stones are all that is left of the three great walls that formerly enclosed the castle within a circle, but nothing remains of the crowded settlement that once hugged the base of the castle rock and formed a town of itself.

Very different was the scene that stretched before

[1] Donizo. [2] Mgr. Mann.

the eyes of Henry on the day when, ridding himself of his noisy supporters in Lombardy, he rode from Reggio with his little company towards Canossa.

At the base of a lofty outpost of the Apennines the angry torrent of the river Enza barred the travellers' way, till following this up to Ciano, they came upon a steep mule-path leading to the summit. High above, among the clouds, towered the vast grey mass of walls surmounting a massive rock; and not until they had struggled with the utmost difficulty through the snow-drifts that blocked the stony track, did they realize the nature of the country by which they were surrounded. Barren heights, snow-covered now, but bare and stony in the best of weather, were crowned by watch-towers from which every movement of the approaching band was noted and reported to the Countess. In the heart of these, and built upon a huge grey cliff, stood the triple walls of the fortress itself. The scene must have made a profound impression upon the mind of Henry, anxious and weary as he was.

"To the north, through the opening in the hills whence poured into the level country the torrent of the Enza, and away round to the east over the lower hills at his feet, he gazed upon the fertile plain of Lombardy, which stretched away like the rolling sea to the mighty barrier of the Alps, through which, at the peril of his life, he had just made his way. He

looked on the walls and towers of Parma, of Reggio, and of Modena. But to the south, and especially to the west, there was nothing on which his eye could rest but ridge after ridge of the rugged, snow-covered Apennines."

To one who was by no means without imagination, the fair plains below must have symbolized the life of popularity and success that might yet be his if the ban of the Church were removed; and those grim heights above, the stern check that that Church was able to oppose to his reckless bid for supremacy. To overcome this it was worth while to undergo real humiliation, though there was not a spark of actual contrition in his heart.

Turning aside to the cluster of buildings at the base of the cliff, the little group of travellers awaited the summons that would bring them to the presence of the Pope. They found there already a number of Bishops and laymen who had once declared themselves on the side of the King, but who, on his downfall, had hastened to put themselves right with Gregory by imploring his pardon. It must have been a curious meeting between these former allies. Indeed, the whole position of Henry was far from dignified, and he made little pretence of maintaining a kingly attitude in face of these newly restored penitents.

But there was one with him—the despised and neglected wife with her child in her arms—whose weary plight might well move a far stonier heart than that

of the mistress of the castle of Canossa. To Bertha, worn out with fatigue and anxiety there came hurrying the Countess Matilda, who led her tenderly within those grim walls before she would lend ear to aught that her kinsman Henry might have to say.

And only when this office of mercy had been performed did she again appear in the outer court of the castle, accompanied now by Abbot Hugh, that man of "lamb-like soul," who yet was famous as the greatest Abbot of his Order, and who was the King's own godfather. Realising his desperate position, Henry implored that these two powerful intercessors would use their influence with the Pope on his behalf. He "conjured and wept" and made many a fair promise, though the Abbot assured him that, though he had already said all that he could on his behalf, Gregory was unmoved in his decision not to hear the accused in the absence of his accusers. Let the King attend the meeting at Augsburg, and there say what he could for himself in the presence of the German Princes who were bringing charges against him. Till then, let him remain excommunicated.

Such, in fact, was the message of the Pope, but Henry refused to accept it. A curiously interesting illustration of Donizo, the poet-historian who was an eyewitness of these things, being the resident chaplain of Countess Matilda, shows the King kneeling at the feet of Hugh, who points to the Countess as though explaining that in her intercession lies his only hope.

Matilda raises a finger in admonition, but her gesture and look are full of pity, and she finally undertook to see the Pontiff once more on his behalf.

At length the reply came back. The King alone might enter the inner court, but he must appear there in the guise of a penitent and there await the pleasure of the Pope. "Placing his crown upon the earth, and despoiled of all royal attire, barefooted, with the white woollen garment of penance thrown over his ordinary garments," Henry awaited with what patience he might the approaching interview.

Inwardly he was seething with rage against the man who had thus dared to humiliate him to the dust, and as he knelt there, watching the light that streamed from the little turret window of the room where Gregory abode, many a plan for vengeance seethed through his angry soul. And as if the Pope were aware of his true state of mind, he made no sign, but left the royal penitent in the bitter cold of the wintry night to learn by experience the true meaning of expiation of past sin.

The next day came, and then the next; and on the morn of that third day it was whispered among the awestruck crowd of retainers outside the walls that in that inner court the King yet remained, solitary and unnoticed, refusing food, and pacing up and down the snowy ground like a furious animal. Many there were who marvelled at Gregory's obduracy, especially when it was reported that whenever the Pope's

shadow crossed the window, the royal penitent knelt on the frozen stones as though imploring mercy.

It was no wish to retaliate, no harsh motive, that lay behind Gregory's apparent hardness of heart. He was by no means convinced of Henry's penitence, to begin with; and he was, moreover, full of doubt as to his wisdom in receiving him. He tells us himself in a letter of that time that he spent those three long days and nights in prayer, entreating God to enlighten him as to what to do in such a serious pass, and what to reserve for the decision of the Council.

But that his heart was full of pity for the suppliant is seen in that same letter in which he says: "He came with few attendants where we were staying, and there miserably remaining before the gate for the space of three days, barefoot and clothed in woollen, all royal attire being laid aside, he did not cease to implore the aid of the Apostolic compassion with many tears, until he moved us all who were present, and all whom the report of this reached, to such a great pity and merciful compassion that, interceding for him with many prayers and tears, all truly wondered at the harshness of our mind, and some, indeed, exclaimed that we had not the gravity of Apostolic severity, but, as it were, the cruelty of tyrannical fierceness."[1]

But Gregory was as "unwilling to be deceived as to deceive," and he would not deal with Henry without

[1] Translation from the "Letters of Hildebrand," by G. Finch.

proofs of his intentions to amend. Yet, at the earnest supplication of the Countess Matilda, he could no longer delay his reception. At the close of that third day, when Henry, in desperation, had declared that " he would no longer break his shield "—that is to say, endure the humiliation laid upon him—Gregory gave orders that he should be allowed to enter the castle. The scene that followed, one of the most famous in history, must be told, as far as possible, in the words of the eyewitness of these things, the chaplain Donizo.

After the King had been allowed to enter the hall of the castle, Gregory came slowly towards him, bending searching looks from under his dark brows. At once the King, casting himself upon the ground with arms outstretched and tearful eyes, cried: " Spare me, pardon me, good Father, I entreat you." And the Pope, seeing his tears, was moved to pity and said: " It is enough."

" As a priest, he was touched by the return to the fold of a sinner." Yet, though his heart might yearn over the lost sheep, the justice of the Holy Father warned him that penance must yet be done and satisfaction made. The King must pledge himself to attend the meeting at Augsburg, and until then he must keep no state, nor take part in public affairs, nor exercise any kingly acts except the raising of taxes for the immediate needs of himself and his family.

The pledge was given, the ban of excommunication taken off, the kiss of peace received. But there was yet another test to which Henry's sincerity must be put. Leading the way to the chapel of the castle, now occupied by seven Cardinals, three Bishops, and several nobles, as well as by Hugh of Cluny and the Countess Matilda herself, Gregory began to say Mass and the King prepared to receive Holy Communion. But at the moment that he knelt at the feet of the Pope, the Holy Father, holding the Host in his hands, said to the penitent these solemn words, after the usual formula of administration: "If," said he, "you are approaching with a good heart, and intend to observe what you have promised, may this Sacred Body be to you the salvation it was to most of the Apostles, otherwise you will receive it unworthily, and without doubt will eat judgment to yourself."

Of the immediate effect of his words upon the King there is conflicting evidence in the records of the time.

A letter of Gregory himself says simply that Henry, being released from the chain of the anathemas, was received into the "grace of Communion and into the bosom of Holy Mother Church."

Other writers speak of a strange indecision. "He was troubled, he hesitated, his face broke out into a perspiration." It is even said that he rose from his knees and asked permission to consult those of his friends who had been allowed to enter the chapel;

and that, having done this, he returned to the altar and begged that the test might be postponed till the meeting at Augsburg.

These conflicting accounts are one of the puzzles of history. There are those, indeed, who would fain believe that the King, knowing well his own evil intentions, would yet hesitate to commit a great act of sacrilege.

But in face of Pope Gregory's own written words, it seems impossible that this could have been the case. The King may have hesitated, his face probably showed signs of distress; but he received the Body of His Lord from the hands of the Pope, knowing that his intention was to break all oaths that he had made at the earliest opportunity.

When that memorable Mass was finished, the Pope at once laid aside all vestige of severity, and having invited the King and Queen to a banquet, entertained Henry with the tender affection he would show to a long-lost prodigal.

The King made a large meal almost in total silence, while Gregory, over his slender portion of vegetables, exerted all his charm to break down his surly reserve, and the Countess, his hostess, with sad-faced Bertha at her side, looked on in dismay.

The King had "gone to Canossa," and his action became henceforth a formula for the triumph of Church over State; but he was already regretting the position of humiliation he had been forced to adopt.

And meantime, his rage against the man who had brought him to his knees was increasing hour by hour so that even in his silence " the fire kindled."

As soon as the banquet was over, the King summoned his followers and hastily left the castle.

DISCORD AND STRIFE

CHAPTER X: *Discord and Strife*

1077–1080

ONE of the most bitter drops in Henry's cup of humiliation was the discovery that his "going to Canossa" was like to cost him the allegiance of the very Princes he had hoped to propitiate. He was free, it is true, from the ban of the Church, and could now resume his former footing; but he had yet to reckon with the "Lombard bulls," the haughty Princes of Northern Italy, who received him, on his return from Canossa, with "contemptuous indignation."

To him, the penitent absolved by the Pope they hated, they would accord no royal state. No processions welcomed him to Reggio on his arrival, the gates were closed in his face, and he was fain to lodge in the suburbs where best he could. A rumour was abroad that the Pope had required a promise of Henry that he would not consort with the Lombard Bishops, who still lay under the ban of the Church; and the Princes laughed in scorn when they heard that the King kept his promise by avoiding these

excommunicated ones by day and meeting them in secret conclave by night.

Others there were across the Alps, men of the wild Northern race, Saxon chieftains and Bavarian Princes, who were not minded to reinstate Henry because of a tardily won absolution. Under Rudolf of Suabia's leadership, these had attempted to meet at Ulen in the February of that year, 1077; but the intense cold and deep snow prevented many of them from arriving, and dispersed the rest. The severity of that winter seems to have made a very deep impression; for when Rudolph was actually chosen as King, and crowned in Henry's stead at the deferred Council held at Forchheim in the March of that year, the historian sees the approval of the Almighty in the fact that from that date " milder weather set in "!

Many and conflicting are the attempts made by the writers of that day to account for this sudden and dramatic intrusion of Rudolph of Suabia upon the scene. Those who side with Henry are, of course, at pains to prove that the whole matter was engineered by a treacherous act of Hildebrand towards his penitent. In disproof of this we have the Pope's most solemn words:

" God is our witness that if Rudolph, who has been made King by those beyond the Alps, has been thus raised to the throne, *it has not been done by our advice.*"

On the other hand, it was equally to the advantage of the party of Rudolph to claim the support of Hilde-

brand. "The King had brushed away his promises like spiders' webs," says one of them, and goes on to give details as to how the Pope, after sending messages to explain that he cannot himself be present at the Council, recommends the Princes to do their best for the kingdom, "too long troubled by the levity of one man," until he is able to be present among them himself. It is needless to point out that there is no proof whatever here that these words imply the necessity of the deposition of the King; and it was not until three years later that Gregory consented in any way to recognise Rudolph in his place. But, in his not unnatural suspicion of Henry's good faith, he took no violent measures against the Duke, thinking, no doubt, that the difficulties in which Henry was now involved would be highly beneficial to his character.

If a story of Henry's dealings with him almost immediately after his submission has any truth in it, the Pope might well hesitate to trust him further, even in personal matters.

It is said that while Henry was outside Reggio, he asked Hildebrand to give him another interview, in order that they might discuss the tangled affairs of State at more length than had been possible in the strained atmosphere of Canossa. Full of anxiety for the safety of her beloved "papa," Matilda insisted on accompanying Gregory with a strong escort. When their journey was half completed, there came

riding into their midst a man-at-arms covered with dust and sweat, who cried to them to go no further for their lives. He had discovered an ambush composed of Henry's followers, who had their orders either to carry off the Pope as their prisoner, or, if he resisted, to kill him outright.

There was nothing for it but to ride back at full speed to Canossa; and after that event, Matilda's watchful care prevailed upon Gregory to pass that spring and summer among the strong castles which guarded the hills of her domain. And in the autumn of that year, when events had proved that a journey into Germany meant certain death at the hands either of the followers of Henry or of those of the insurgent Princes, he was prevailed upon to return to Rome. A few weeks later he was called to the dying bed of the Empress Agnes, that sad mother of the turbulent Henry, who after her son's excommunication had lived as a heartbroken recluse at Rome. Separated now for ever from the son she had never taught to rule himself, the Empress received the consolations of the Faith from the hands of the man he had so deeply wronged and openly defied; and early in the next year (1078) she died.

By the time Gregory had returned to Rome after his long absence in Tuscany, Henry had completely thrown off the pretence of keeping the promises made at Canossa.

He once more openly consorted with the excom-

municated Bishops of Lombardy, to whose hands, soiled as they were with simony, he even committed the care of his young son; and having thus completely broken with his unhappy wife, he set out for Germany, "to fight to the death for his kingdom." From thence came heavy news to Rome of the shameful way in which the Papal legates in that land were mishandled, news which made the heart of Gregory burn with wrath within him. Was it to console him by the knowledge of the devotion of at least one faithful heart that we hear at this time of an action of the Countess Matilda which has been called the "greatest event of those times"?

"For the good of her own soul and those of her parents," she gave to the Papacy, in the person of Gregory, all her estates, to be held by him or his successors after her death, whether they were situated in Parma, Reggio, Modena, and Mantua, to be claimed as Papal States by right of "knife and knotty twig, by glove, and by sod of earth and branch of tree." Seventeen years after Gregory had gone to his rest, this gallant lady renewed her "Donation"; and the Charter thus given may still be seen in part, engraved on marble, in the crypt of St. Peter's at Rome.

The three years that followed this event are filled with the record of discord and strife. On one side stood Rudolph with the party of reform behind him; and on the other, Henry, with the Bishops who had defied the Papal ban upon simony, the Bohemian

gipsy tribes, and most of Lombardy. Both of these defended their cause before the Pope through their envoys; and while Gregory found that neither could nor would grant him the safe-conduct that was necessary before he could be present at the Assembly which must pass final judgment upon their rights, he insists again and again on the fact that decision must rest with such an Assembly.

This wise and diplomatic policy brought nothing but abuse in return. The followers of Rudolph reproached Gregory with being the sole cause of the miserable war that was devastating Germany, and accused him of fickleness because he would not denounce King Henry.

On this occasion the old sharp temper flares up once more. "You accuse me of fickleness!" writes the Pope. "Why, none of you has yet suffered greater trials and injuries than I have, seeing that . . . all the Lombards are in favour of Henry, and accuse me of excessive harshness and uncharitableness in his regard. Till this time, however, we have favoured neither party."

Then there is fought a great battle at Märchheim between the rivals, after which, since it settles nothing either way, the Saxons rail again at Gregory for his neutrality, demanding that he shall excommunicate Henry afresh.

Yet still the Pope maintains that the great imperial Assembly must settle the rival claims, knowing well

that, apart from this, the unsupported judgment of the Church would but raise up fresh strife among those who recognised the authority of the Pope only when it was to their advantage so to do.

When it seemed clear that such an Assembly was impossible in the present state of affairs, a Synod was called at Rome in the March of 1080. This was within two months of the battle at Härchheim, a battle which, if it had not ended in the King's total defeat, had at least weakened him to such a degree that he was constrained to send envoys to attend the Council of Rome in his interests when he found that the ambassadors of Rudolph had already taken their way thither.

This Council, held in the Constantine basilica at the Lateran, is notable in several ways.

It laid down with the utmost clearness the law of the Church concerning Investiture, the question which was already beginning to throw its shadow over the Church in England, so soon to be under the rule of Archbishop Anselm.

It then proceeded to listen to the claims of Rudolph, as set forth by his ambassadors. These were by no means weak.

They showed that Henry, when deprived by the Papal excommunication of his kingdom, had regained possession of it "by fire and sword"; that he had driven holy Bishops from their Sees, and filled the latter with worthless favourites; that through him

thousands of valuable lives had been lost; that the Princes who had been loyal to Gregory and had refused to acknowledge Henry as King, had been treated with insult and contumely; and that it was solely his doing that the Council which was to decide between him and Rudolph had not been held.

This was a strong case; and when the ambassadors of Henry came forward, no one wished to hear them. What more, indeed, could be said in favour of a man who had broken every oath, and who was now openly defying the power of the Church? Already Matilda had done her best to act as mediator once more between him and Gregory, in the person of her cousin Theodoric, Duke of Upper Lorraine. But this Theodoric was himself under the ban of excommunication, and the Pope would have no dealings with him or with any other ambassador of the perjured King. Still, they no doubt had their hearing; though the blankness with which their representations were received soon proved how futile had been their words.

Rising from his episcopal seat, Gregory now solemnly renewed the sentence of excommunication upon Henry, and proceeded to pass that of deposition.

The speech was a memorable one. He begins by declaring once again how reluctantly he had entered the field of public affairs, but, having been constrained to do so, how he realised it was his duty to "reproach the people of God for their crimes." He sums up the wrongdoings of Henry, his attempt to overthrow the

Pope, the circumstances of his first excommunication and absolution. He points out that this did not re-establish Henry as King nor oblige the nobles to do him fealty; but that when the Princes and Bishops chose Rudolph in his stead, saying that he was ready to obey Gregory in all things, the Pope still maintained strict fairness towards Henry, and promised to support him if he should find, after due hearing of both sides, that justice lay with him. "But he, persuaded that his own forces were enough to overcome Rudolph unassisted, disdained to attend to my reply."

He goes on to show how he did all in his power to get a conference called which should examine the claims of the rivals, and how Henry successfully opposed this conference.

"Therefore has he incurred the penalty of excommunication, and lies under the ban of anathema, for the sin of disobedience which is equivalent to the sin of idolatry.

"And for as much as he has delivered a great number of Christian people over to death, has pillaged and destroyed churches, and laid waste almost the entire realm of Germany:

"Therefore, trusting in the judgment and mercy of God, and of Mary, His most holy and ever-virgin Mother, I excommunicate and anathematise Henry, so-called King, together with all his supporters; in the Name of the Omnipotent God, and in your name

I depose him from the Kingdom of Germany and the government of Italy, and strip him of all regal power and dignity.

"I forbid any Christian to obey him as his King, and I absolve from their oaths those who have sworn, or who should hereafter swear, fealty to him.

"May he, with all his supporters, be impotent in battle; and may he gain no victory as long as his life shall last. . . . Let him be confounded, but to penance, that in the day of the Lord his soul may be saved."

The Council then solemnly elected Rudolph as King of Germany, and received, as a vassal of the Holy See, his crown, upon which was inscribed: "The Rock, which is Christ, gave a crown to Peter, and Peter gives it to Rudolph."

The effect upon Europe was extraordinary. "Never," says one of Gregory's biographers,[1] "has a voice been heard from Italy that commanded such attention in Germany; what the Roman Emperors, with their legions of soldiers, could never effect, a single monk achieved by his word alone. He realised this miracle by bringing the consciences of men under the sway of his sovereign moral authority."

[1] Voigt, "Life of Gregory VII."

THE SHADOWS DARKEN

CHAPTER XI: *The Shadows Darken*

1080–1083

THE decisions of the Synod of Rome in 1080 meant, of course, war to the knife between Henry and the Pope.

In Germany, those Bishops who supported Henry and who had themselves for the most part been banned by Gregory, openly defied the latter, even attacking him to the people during the celebration of Mass, and insisting that he should no longer be recognised as Pope. Some of them declared that the "only way to cure the evils of Church and State was to cut off the head of Hildebrand, the pestiferous serpent by whom they had been caused, the execrable disturber of the laws of God and man."

But further than this they dared not go at first, for "they feared the wisdom of the man; his resources confounded them; the quickness of his intelligence astounded them; and what is wont to strike men especially, his command of money made a deep impression on them."[1]

Goaded, however, by the vindictiveness of the

[1] Guido of Ferrara.

deposed King, about thirty Bishops, most of them Lombards, met Henry at Brixen in the following June, and there solemnly declared that Gregory was under the spell of an evil spirit and must be "canonically deposed and expelled from his See."

This absurd document was signed by Cardinal Hugo "for all the Roman Cardinals," and by Henry, "by the grace of God, King," and acting upon it, they with some difficulty discovered a Bishop who was willing to be elected in his stead, and so declared Guibert of Ravenna to be Pope, under the title of Clement III.

There were now two Kings of Germany, both in the act of flying at each other's throats, and two so-called Popes, of whom one, the pretender Guibert, was preparing to enter Italy in all the state in which his proud and ambitious nature took such keen delight.

For the moment it seemed as though the cause of Henry had triumphed, for just at this time the supporters of Gregory proved but broken reeds.

In the October of that memorable year, Matilda, who had hastened to put all her troops at the Pope's command, saw her army routed by that of Henry. Town after town was lost, and many of her vassals deserted her. There was nothing for it but to retreat to Canossa, and there to hold out in her mountain fastness. Meanwhile from Rome, Gregory, heavy at heart with anxiety for her, writes a little later to

a faithful Bishop and Abbot that they should "let our daughter Matilda know if she can depend on them for sending her sufficient help in the way of men-at-arms to maintain her difficult position; otherwise she might be forced to make peace with Henry and lose all her possessions."

The next hope of Gregory lay in the assistance of Robert Guiscard, who, however, was not above driving a hard bargain with him by insisting that he should be allowed to hold without question certain estates of the Holy See. But Robert's heart at this time was in the East, where he hoped to overthrow Constantine the Great and make himself Emperor; and Gregory soon saw that he could not depend on him for help.

Meantime, however, the cause which was dislocating Europe and threatening a serious schism within the Church, was being hurried to a fatal end. In the October of that year, 1080, the armies of Henry and Rudolph met at Elster in a tremendous battle. It has been well said that it might have been a religious rather than a civil war.

On the side of Rudolph the Saxons were led to the charge by Bishops and clergy chanting in solemn tones the Psalm "God standeth in the congregation of the Princes."

The Archbishops of Cologne and Treves supported Henry, and the Bishops who followed them chanted the *Te Deum* directly any point of the battle turned in

his favour. The result of the actual fighting is difficult to follow, as each of the partisan historians claims victory for his own side.

The Saxon Bruno says that the troops of Henry were routed; his camp, full of gold and silver, plundered. The other side claims a victory for Henry, which would, however, be difficult to establish as far as his army is concerned, or for himself, since he fled from the field. But the only really important fact is that Rudolph, in the moment of victory, as his friends declare, was struck down and slain. Bruno tells us that he lived long enough to welcome with joy the news of victory, and died in holy submission to God's will. The supporters of Henry tell us, on the other side, that at his last moment, gazing upon the bleeding arm stump from which his hand had been severed, he said:

"With this hand I ratified my oath of fealty to my Sovereign Henry: I have now lost life and kingdom.

"Bethink ye, who have led me on, in obedience to whose counsels I have ascended the throne, whether ye have guided me aright."

Still may be seen in the Cathedral of Merseburg the tomb of this ill-fated Prince, upon which stands a bronze plate, in low relief, representing him in imperial attire.

"For him death was life, for he fell for the Church" —such is the epitaph of Rudolph of Suabia.

"King Rudolph died and virtue was overwhelmed," says a poet of that day. It is certainly true that his death was a heavy blow to the cause of the Church and to the high aims of Pope Gregory. During the next five years the clouds were to gather dark round that old grey head, and the warm heart that was so full of zeal for the reform of Christendom was to be crushed and wellnigh broken.

In the spring of 1081, Henry once more crossed the Alps, not this time as a penitent but as a conqueror. His cousin Matilda, watching his movements with wary eyes from her eagle's perch at Canossa, saw him pass through Tuscany to Ravenna, but without actually molesting her territory save in his unsuccessful siege of the city of Florence. He also at this time seems to have made an equally vain attempt to draw Robert Guiscard to his side by arranging a marriage between Conrad, the young son who had made that fateful journey to Canossa as a babe, and Robert Guiscard's daughter; and of this plot the faithful Matilda sends due word to Gregory.

Meantime it was Henry's aim to march directly upon Rome, and being joined by Guibert, they encamped in the month of May in the meadows of Nero, outside the city. Within the walls, the brave old Pope faced the situation with undaunted courage, although those around him implored him to make peace with the King, who now seemed to hold everything in his own hands. "It were more glorious,"

he writes at that terrible time, "to fight through long years for the liberty of Holy Church, than to submit to a miserable and diabolical servitude." He himself was prepared to suffer death rather than approve the cause of an impious King and anti-Pope.

Instead of submission, we find him solemnly renewing the sentence of excommunication against Henry as a "despiser of the law of Christ, a destroyer of churches and of the Empire, and as an aider and abettor of heretics." And then, though in much anxiety as to the fate of his beloved daughter in Christ, the Countess Matilda, he awaited calmly the onset of Henry.

Stirred by his courage, the Romans for once rallied loyally round their Pope, and Henry's attempt at invasion was foiled.

"The Romans and all those who surround me are full of faith and the spirit of God, and ready to serve me in everything," writes Gregory; and when the summer sun brought the ravages of ague to those unhealthy plains, the King retired north again.

There he now determined to avenge his lack of success upon his cousin Matilda, that most faithful of Gregory's allies. "He turned," says Bishop Anselm of Lucca, "all his fury against the Countess; he burnt the houses and destroyed the castles in her dominions, but the mercy of God so provided that he did not do any considerable harm."

Anselm himself was forced to flee from Lucca, and

took refuge with Matilda for a time. Later on, he was appointed Vicar of the Pope in Lombardy, and ruled those cities whose Bishops had gone over to Henry. And meantime, while the fair lands of Tuscany were being laid waste, castles besieged, towns gained over by the enemy, Canossa remained as a refuge for all those who were suffering from persecution, who were homeless or defeated in the field. "And to the charity of giving the Countess added such courtesy, in deed and word, that the benefited went away consoled and strengthened, and more able to endure their terrible persecutions."

The next year saw an extraordinary position of affairs.

Early in 1082, Henry appeared with his army before Rome; but before attempting the siege, he made a strange proposition to the Romans without the walls.

Referring to Gregory as "that stumbling-block Hildebrand," he proposed that the Pope should be summoned before an Assembly to be held outside the city, which should decide as to his innocence or guilt and as to whether he should now be deposed, or be recognised as the legitimate Pope.

"If Hildebrand is recognised by the Assembly," said he, "I will obey him."

The suggestion is curious enough, since it entirely throws over the cause of Guibert, his own nominee, who must have heard of it with considerable disgust. But it fell very flat, for the Romans merely treated the

idea with contempt; and Henry was once again obliged to abandon the siege.

His return to the north was marked by the alliance of Prince Jordan of Capua, a fickle Norman who had once been a firm supporter of Matilda and the Pope; and though this was in some respect compensated by the devoted generosity of the Countess in sending the impoverished city of Rome all the gold and silver vessels of Canossa, melted down to the weight of seven hundred pounds, the outlook for the Pope was darkening more and more.

THE TRIUMPH OF WRONG

CHAPTER XII: *The Triumph of Wrong*

1083–1084

THE early weeks of the year 1083 saw the Holy Father in sorry plight as far as this world is concerned. The money upon which the loyalty of the Romans so much depended was wellnigh exhausted, the help he had looked for from certain Saxon chieftains was not forthcoming, his few allies were almost at the end of their resources.

And before the gates of Rome in the April of that year stood Henry, with fresh troops and implacable resentment in his heart against the man who had once humbled his proud head to the dust.

But still the undaunted voice rang out from the Apostolic Chair. "We all wish," he writes at this crisis, "that the ungodly should repent. . . . We all seek that the Holy Church, now trampled down throughout the world, may be restored to her former comeliness and strength; we all labour that God may be glorified in us. . . . Rouse yourselves then and be strong. Conceive a lively hope."[1]

In those days Rome was divided into the city proper

[1] Bowden's translation.

and the Leonine part which lies on the right bank of the Tiber. By an accident, Henry suddenly found himself master of this outer city. "On the 2nd of June, while both parties were in profound repose, two followers of the Archbishop of Milan stole under a part of the walls which had been slightly broken. They climbed up, found the sentinels asleep, killed them, got possession of the tower, and made a signal to the royal army, which advanced rapidly to their support." [1]

But within the fortress of St. Angelo, to which his friends had hurried him, Gregory, together with the city across the Tiber, still bade defiance to the King, who only waited to see his creature Guibert crowned at St. Peter's before retiring north again to avoid the summer heat.

His hopes were soaring, for he had good reason to think that the Romans, weary of the long siege, were not unwilling to betray their Pope. They had suggested a Council in which Gregory should thoroughly examine all the points at issue; and they added a secret clause, by which they promised that Henry should be crowned by the Pope in the following winter *if he were alive or not already fled.*

The Council itself was by no means against the wishes of Gregory, who summoned to it Bishops and Abbots from all parts of Christendom, to meet him in the November of that year. But it seemed as though

[1] Landulf, "History of Milan."

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POPE GREGORY VII

the evil conscience of the King could neither face a Synod nor allow him to keep faith with either Pope or layman. He seized the persons of many Bishops and Abbots as they journeyed to Rome, he tortured monks who had fallen into his hands, and was only given pause by the discovery that one of his turbulent Bishops had actually imprisoned his own godfather, the saintly Hugh of Cluny, who was hastening to Rome to make peace, as once before, between King and Pope.

So the Council proved too small to come to any decision of importance; and once more negotiations were exchanged for the sword. Fresh from ravaging the lands of the Countess Matilda, Henry appeared again before Rome, in December, but only to find that the fickle Romans had turned against him.

He reminded them of their promise that he should be crowned; and they replied that Gregory would only do so "if he made satisfaction for his faults"; adding that if he were not prepared to do this, they would keep their promise "by causing the Pope, with a curse, to drop the crown on his head by means of a stick from the walls of the castle of St. Angelo."[1]

But alas for the man who put his faith in the fickle Princes of Rome! Within three months of the day on which these brave words were spoken, and at the moment when Henry was about to give up the siege in despair, the Romans sent to him an embassy which

[1] Mann, "Lives of the Popes."

offered to surrender the city. Through the gates of St. John swarmed the German troops, and at once Henry, together with Guibert, the anti-Pope, took possession of the Lateran.

Hurriedly retreating to the castle of St. Angelo, the brave old Pope held out there while a handful of his supporters fortified the bridges over the Tiber, and barred the passage of Henry's troops through the streets for over two months. And meantime, Gregory from his watch-tower could look down and see the procession pass to the Lateran, where his rival was to be formally elected to fill his place. Henry even dared to send him three several summons to attend this mock Synod, where he was declared excommunicate, deposed, and after which Guibert was enthroned as Pope at St. Peter's, under the name of Clement III.

A week later was fulfilled the chief aim of the perjured King, and Henry was crowned Emperor by an excommunicate Pope, himself consecrated by three excommunicate Bishops. From a historian of that day [1] we have a singularly minute description of the rite. He shows the procession on its way to St. Peter's, headed by the Holy Cross and the lance of St. Maurice. Then came the clergy, followed by the King clad in a long tunic of scarlet cloth decked with gold and gems, wearing golden spurs and a great sword, with gloves of linen and a diadem on his head.

[1] Benzo, whose account, however, is probably more inspired by fancy than by fact.

Over his tunic he wore what is known as the Frisian cloak, which only an Emperor might don. In his right hand he carried the orb, in his left the sceptre.

Then came Pope Clement, the Archbishop of Milan, and many Dukes, nobles, and magistrates, the latter wearing the patrician crown. And on either side the nations of the world, looking on, cheered or groaned as the case might be.

During the Mass, Henry was consecrated and blessed, and then adjourned to a banquet, after which, being now dressed in a green cloak and white mitre, he went in procession to Vespers.

The next day saw Henry crowned with the "Roman crown," and received by the Senate at the steps of St. Peter's.

Then, mounting his horse, and surrounded by German, Roman, and Lombard knights, he went to the Lateran, being greeted all along the route by "gayful songs." There he was met by troops of young scholars, whose voices cried "Alleluia" at the Mass which followed. (March, 1084.)

But still aloft in the tower of St. Angelo, there lay the old lion, caged but threatening, who had so often dared to withstand the new-made Emperor to the face. Determined to get him in his clutches, Henry closely besieged the fortress; and Gregory, as a last resource, called upon Robert Guiscard to come to his aid.

The news of his condition arrived at a time when

Robert, with a powerful army, was about to embark for the East; but at once he turned aside to the succour of the Pope. Promptly came his message to Henry, declaring that "if he did not leave Rome of his own accord, he would be driven from it, and there would be no one who could pluck him from his hands."

At once both Henry and the anti-Pope abandoned Rome, under the pretext of important business elsewhere, and six days later the army of Guiscard descended upon the city. Finding that the Romans intended to oppose them, the wild Normans, with the cry of "Guiscard" on their lips, made a furious rush for the castle of St. Angelo; and while some busied themselves in finding Gregory and escorting him back to the Lateran, others seized the chance to sack the churches on the route.

But worse things were in store for Rome. The citizens, furious at this incursion of "barbarians," strove to drive them from the streets; and the Normans, who cared nothing for the glories of old Rome, retaliated by firing the houses, killing the men, and subjecting women and children to fearful indignities. Those whom they took captive they sold as slaves; their houses were pillaged, and much of the most beautiful part of the city was destroyed by fire.

For this Guiscard cared little. "I will give the bloodstained city to the flames," said he, "and by

God's help, I will restore it to a better condition, and fill it with inhabitants from across the Alps."

Not until three days had passed did Guiscard pu an end to a conflagration that changed the face of the Eternal City for ever. Some say that he was moved to stay the damage by the entreaties of Gregory, who threw himself at his feet, imploring mercy for Rome in the words, " I came to build, not to destroy." However that may be, the cowed and humiliated Romans, unmindful of the fact that Henry's work of destruction would probably have been even more complete, hardened their hearts against the man who had, as they said, " sacrificed them to his ideals, even as he had sacrificed the peace of the world."

DEATH IN EXILE

CHAPTER XIII: *Death in Exile*

1084–1085

THE sack of Rome by the Normans was the crowning tragedy of Hildebrand's career. His opponents laid to his charge the horrors that had overwhelmed the city; his friends declared that such a fate well befitted the Romans, who, like Judas, had sold their Master to the Emperor.

For him there was now no place in the Rome he had loved and ruled for eleven years; and when Robert Guiscard hastened away from that scene of desolation, too anxious to resume his journey to the East even to wait to drive out the anti-Pope from his lurking place in Tivoli, Gregory, leaving his few possessions behind him, left the city in his company.

The decision to do this must have cost him very dear. But with Guibert and his supporters in the neighbourhood, the presence of Gregory in Rome must inevitably lead to another struggle between their respective followers.

The city had suffered more than enough, and it should have nothing more to endure through his presence.

Slowly and sadly he proceeded on his last journey, pausing awhile at Monte Cassino, the Great Benedictine foundation, whose Abbot knelt at his feet with loving reverence, and paid the expenses of those last few years for the Pope who was now without means, and almost without friends. From thence he travelled, still under Guiscard's protection, to Salerno, from whence Robert sailed for the East, and Gregory remained to die in exile.

And still from that southern port rang out undaunted the roar of the old lion, thundering fresh excommunication against King and anti-Pope, and summoning the faithful Bishops to the side of the representative of God and Holy Church.

"Come," cried he, "to the succour of your Father and your Mother, if by them you would have forgiveness of your sins and all blessings in this life and the next."

The pathos of the thing is that in those days even his most loyal children deserted him. There was no rally, not even open declarations of faith in his cause. And meantime, while Henry held the "Seal of the Fisherman," all kinds of false reports were bruited abroad as to what had become of the Pope.

Some said he had deserted Rome and left it to its fate; others that he was a prisoner in Guiscard's hands.

Only the voice of the faithful Matilda was raised on his behalf, and she sent energetic messages to Germany to this effect:

"Matilda (such as she is by the grace of God—if she is anything), to all the faithful in the kingdom of the Teutons, greeting!

"We make known to you that Henry, that false King, has stolen away the seal of the Lord Pope Gregory. Wherefore if you hear anything that is contrary to the words of our envoys, you may know it to be lies. . . .

"Know that the Lord Pope has already reconquered Sutri and Nepi, and Barabbas the Robber, that is to say, Henry's Pope, has fled. Farewell, and look out for Henry's stratagems!"

But "Barabbas" had not fled far, and the taking of Sutri and Nepi by Guiscard counted for very little. Still, the news that the dauntless Countess, "half knight, half nun," as she has well been called, had managed to rout the King's forces in the July of that year, must have brought cheer to Gregory by the Salerno shore.

Her castle at Sorbara in Modena was being fiercely assaulted by the King's forces when, one dark night, the Countess stole out with a little company and completely surrounded the besiegers. The signal for the onslaught was the cry "St. Peter"; and as this thundered forth in the ears of the sleeping soldiers they were, in most part, struck down ere they could awake. A schismatic Bishop, six captains, and a hundred knights were captured with much valuable baggage, while another Bishop fled naked to the woods.

We can guess how the keen hawk-eye of the old Pope would light up as he heard of this bold stroke, the last that his beloved daughter in Christ could strike for him before his end. September saw his last farewell to Guiscard, his evil genius in so many ways, but yet a staunch and loyal friend, who was to outlive him only by two months. By Christmas he heard with grimly restrained grief that Guibert the anti-Pope was holding his Court in Rome; and from far-off Germany came rumours of fresh wars and fiery wrath between those who stood on Henry's side, and those who declared him to be excommunicate and deposed.

But the strength of the man who had hurled the thunders of the Church against all that stood for wrong in the world of Christendom was failing fast. With his last effort he wrote his famous Encyclical, in which he declares that the aim of all his life had been that "the Church should recover her ancient splendour and remain free, chaste, and catholic." It ends with these pathetic words from one who has been accused of showing forth the terrors of the Lord rather than His loving kindness.

"May the Almighty Lord, the Author of all good, enlighten your spirit and fertilise it by His love and the love of your neighbour. Thus you will have as debtors your Father and your Mother, and the day will come when you shall be united to them. Amen."

In the early months of the year 1085, the old Pope

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THE COUNTESS MATILDA

had ceased to write, but not to preach and teach wherever he found a chance of doing so "in defence of justice." But he knew that the end was not far off. When the month of May was dawning over that fair land, Hildebrand lay upon his deathbed.

There were those who began to question him anxiously as to them whom he had excommunicated in those stirring years of warfare against disobedience and evil-doing. He replied gently that, with the exception of Henry, Guibert, and their most prominent supporters, he absolved all those who believed that he, standing in the place of St. Peter and St. Paul, had the power to do so.

They asked him of his last will and testament; and he said, smiling, that he had nought but his vestments to leave, and of those he left his mitre to Anselm of Lucca.

They marvelled at his calm, and he replied: "I have only one source of consolation. I have ever loved justice and hated iniquity."

"What shall we do without you?" they mournfully conjectured; and the old man, raising his eyes and hands to heaven, said very simply, "I am going thither, and there, with earnest entreaty, will I commend you to the mercy of God."

Then after urging the Cardinals who stood by his bed to accept as Pope only one who had been regularly elected, he received for the last time the Body of His Lord, and after this he cried out suddenly:

"I have loved justice and hated iniquity, and therefore I die in exile."

"In exile, Holy Father," replied a Bishop, "you can not die; for in the stead of Christ and His Apostles you have received from God the Gentiles for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession."

On the 25th of May 1085, died the man who was well described as "the terror of the wicked and the shield of the good, who never ceased to lead the people from the paths of vice to those which lead to heaven, and whose own life was in accordance with his teaching."[1]

The tomb of the exiled Pope was in the new-built Church of St. Matthew at Salerno, where some five hundred years later his body was found as though he lay asleep, clad in the vestments of a Pontiff. Later on they were moved to the chapel, now known as St. Gregory's, at Salerno. It was by the order of Benedict XIII., in 1729, that Gregory was formally accorded the title of Saint.

The last days of Gregory VII. were passed in the deep shadows of neglect, of exile, of apparent failure. His ruthless enemy Henry was to live for twenty years longer, and for a time to carry all things according to his will.

Yet, could Gregory have foreseen the future, he would have realised that his ideals for the Church were

[1] William of Apulia.

all to work out their own fulfilment, and that Henry, driven from his throne by his own son, was to know a bitterness of humiliation and defeat that was far worse than the spiritual abasement at Canossa.

Within a few years of his death the Papacy was master of the field and the rights of the Emperor were closely shorn. The spirit of the Crusades, which was about to swamp all Christendom, a spirit which was so entirely in accord with the hopes of Hildebrand, had the effect of bringing to nought the designs of those who still strove against the Church which blessed and organised that great movement; the rights of investiture were almost fully won; the Church stood towering triumphant above the heads of those who had opposed her claims.

THE TRIUMPH OF RIGHT

CHAPTER XIV: *The Triumph of Right*

1085–1115

THE sun that had set with the death of the exiled Pope in such dark clouds of apparent failure, was to rise in days to come on a Christendom renewed and purified by those ten strenuous years of conflict for right.

Never, perhaps, do we find a more striking instance of others reaping in joy what had been sown in tears; and the history of the twelfth century is to a large extent that of the triumph of the ideals of Hildebrand over those forces of evil which he had never ceased to attack.

In this twentieth century, at the close of a great world war, the whole point of that conflict must make a very special appeal. For the enemy that Hildebrand fought with such untiring vigour was that of a military autocracy which, unchecked, would have crushed all Christendom beneath its iron heel.

Yet the weapons with which he opposed this spirit were not those of flesh and blood, but those of moral sanctity, and of spiritual authority.

" It was the conflict of mental with physical power,

of literature with ignorance, of religion with injustice and evil living. . . .

"He found the Papacy dependent on the Empire: he sustained her by alliances extending over almost the whole Italian peninsula.

"He found the Papacy electoral by the Roman people and clergy: he left it electoral by a college of Papal nomination.

"He found the Emperor the virtual Patron of the Holy See: he wrested that power from his hands.

"He found the secular clergy the allies and dependents of the secular power: he converted them into auxiliaries of his own.

"He found the higher ecclesiastics in servitude to the temporal Sovereigns: he delivered them from that yoke.

"He found the patronage of the Church the mere desecrated spoil and merchandise of Princes: he reduced it within the dominion of the Supreme Pontiff.

"He is celebrated as the reformer of the impure and profane abuses of his age; he is more justly entitled to the praise of having left the impress of his own gigantic character on the history of all the ages that have succeeded him."[1]

Such is the fine summary made of his work by one who, not of the Church of Hildebrand, yet accords him a most sincere if unwilling admiration. Complete as it is, it fails to move the heart of the reader

[1] Stephen, "Ecclesiastical Statesmen."

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ST. GREGORY THE SEVENTH

From the painting of Raphael

as does another sentence of the same striking essay.

" Hildebrand," he says, " was a builder, erecting by Divine command a temple of which the Divine hand had drawn the design and provided the materials."

It was because he did his lifework with his eyes turned heavenward that St. Gregory earned his title and won for the Papacy a position unique in Europe.

And what of the man himself ?

He was, to begin with, a man of prayer, consumed with love for the Blessed Sacrament, and with a deep devotion to Our Blessed Lady. And with this, he possessed a deep love for God's poor, a love which was returned with deepest affection by the " little ones " of his flock.

History shows him, it is true, showing hardness towards an impenitent and hypocritical King; but it also shows him weeping over the corpse of an assassinated monk, one, moreover, of his own opponents, covering the poor body with his own cloak, and saying Mass for his departed soul.

We see him hurling the weapons of excommunication on those who persisted in defying the laws of God; but we also hear him pleading for peace and anxious to offer mercy.

We see him working to extend the temporal power of the Church, but we also see him unresting in his determination to free that Church from impurity; and if towards the " plunderer of the priest, the poor,

or the trader," he proved himself inflexible, he was gentle as a woman to those who were penitent, helpless, or dependent upon his aid.

And if, in a rude and rugged age, he "knew not how to measure his blows," it was pointed out by one who wrote in the century that followed his own, that in so doing he did but dare to lance the wounds of Kings with unsparing but not unkindly hand.

Within two years of the day on which Hildebrand breathed his last the tide had completely turned in favour of the Papacy. It was Urban, the nominee of St. Gregory, who saw restored to Christendom the long-lost province of Spain by the defeat of the Moors and the capture of Toledo. It was he who received the submission of the Normans, the heirs of Guiscard.

It was he who finally settled the position of the Papacy by making it the centre towards which all men looked for the inspiration of the Crusades. This it was that finally dislodged Guibert, the nominee of Henry, from St. Angelo, where he in his turn had taken refuge, and which freed Europe from the pretensions of an anti-Pope. The Council of Clermont in 1095 established the work that Hildebrand had set on foot, and made the Pope supreme in Christendom.

There remains only to sketch very briefly the story of the two people who had been most closely connected with the life-work of Hildebrand.

During the seven years that followed the death of the Great Pontiff, the power of Henry waxed and grew, in spite of the fact that one Pope after another refused to acknowledge him, and avoided him as an excommunicated man. In 1087 died his broken-hearted Queen, and he immediately married Praxedis, and with her at his side defied the Papacy with a jeer and a taunt. In defiance of his wishes, during these years of triumph, his cousin Matilda of Tuscany, urged thereto by Urban II., who wished to strengthen her position, married, though with reluctance, the boy Guelph, son of the Duke of Bavaria, young enough to be her own son. This alliance of Tuscany and Bavaria enraged the Emperor, who after a long and difficult contest managed, by dint of bribes and corruption, to seize Mantua and most of the country beyond the River Po.

For awhile the brave Countess fought on courageously, while little by little her fair lands were torn away.

"Fortune varies," she assured her weary and vanquished army. "Victors yesterday, we are conquered to-day; courage alone lives through every day."

But even her fine soul grew weary of the endless fighting, in which her boy-husband proved himself a craven; and when Henry offered peace and the restoration of Tuscany if Matilda would acknowledge Guibert as Pope, she was sorely tempted to give way.

A conference was called, and she propounded the question, "Was it lawful to purchase the peace of the Church by acknowledging the anti-Pope?"

The Bishop of Reggio, a holy and learned Prelate, urged that the miseries of the time made peace a necessity, but John the Hermit recalled Matilda in stirring words to the high ideals of Hildebrand.

"No peace!" he cried. "Peace would be war declared against Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How, great and powerful Countess, daughter of Peter, can you consent thus to lose the fruit of so many toils? No, continue to combat for the cause of Christ. Do not hesitate."

"If the earth fails you, heaven will support you, and will give the victory to the prayers of those who remain faithful to God's Church."

It was enough. Never again did the knightly Countess waver in the fight; and, indeed, from that moment the tide of fortune turned in her favour. When the Emperor marched upon Canossa in her absence at Parma, she made a forced march, and reached the fortress on a day when thick fog prevented the Germans from realising how few were her followers. Falling upon the besiegers, she quickly put them to flight and captured the royal standard. A little later she not only caused Bavaria to revolt against Henry, but forced the latter to retreat from Nogara, leaving all his treasure in her hands.

Within a few years a series of disasters had fallen

on the Emperor. His second wife, Praxedis, horrified at his immorality, deserted him and took refuge with Matilda. She was followed by Conrad, the eldest son of Henry, who as a babe had taken the momentous journey to Canossa, and who now rebelled against his father and was crowned King of Italy. Before long, all Christendom stood aghast at the unveiled wickedness of the man whom some had been glad to hail as Emperor in defiance of Hildebrand, and gazed with deepest pity upon Praxedis and Matilda as they supported Pope Urban in his preaching of the First Crusade.

But a more bitter penalty had yet to be paid by Henry. In 1102, Conrad being dead, his second son Henry revolted against his father, on the score that he was outcast and excommunicate, and actually took him prisoner at Bingen in the Christmas of 1105. At a Diet held at Ingelheim, the aged and broken Emperor was forced to appear before an assembly of foes, at the head of which stood the Papal Legate and his own son.

And then was fully avenged the memory of Hildebrand, for at Ingelheim Henry was made to abdicate, and to acknowledge that he had "unjustly persecuted the holy Gregory, wickedly set up the anti-Pope, and oppressed the Church." In vain he implored the help of the King of France and the sympathy of the aged Hugh of Cluny, who had witnessed his degradation at Canossa, nearly thirty years before.

Then, broken at last, he asked if the ban of excommunication might be removed, if he met all their demands. But the Legate replied coldly that this was beyond his powers; the ex-Emperor must plead for that in the Rome he had tried to destroy. The unhappy Henry was not capable of this last proof of contrition. He fled to Cologne, and whilst vainly trying to raise forces against his son, died at Liège in the August of 1106. Tradition says that he, the once proud Emperor who had driven Gregory VII. from the gates of Rome, spent his last days in begging for a crust of bread at the doors of a church.

The Countess Matilda was to survive her unhappy cousin for nine more years, and to die at the age of seventy-five, fighting almost to the last. For in her old age the men of Mantua rebelled against her, so that she advanced against them with her army. But when they saw her noble countenance, still comely, though the thick dark hair had whitened and the bright dark eyes grown dim, they repented themselves, threw away their arms, and besought her forgiveness on their knees.

On her return, wearied with the expedition, she insisted on hearing the Christmas Mass at midnight at Bondero, near Reggio. There in the cold chapel she caught a deadly chill, and though for seven months her vigour fought for life, she never recovered. She died in the July of 1115, saying as her lips kissed the

crucifix: " O Thou, whom I have served so long, I pray Thee now wipe out my sins."

She lies in St. Peter's, Rome, whither her remains were removed from Mantua in 1635; and the words upon her tomb hail her as a " woman worthy of eternal praise . . . a Protectress of the Apostolic See."

For more than thirty years Matilda of Tuscany had fought for the rights of the Church with all the strength of her strong nature. Yet she was a true woman too. We know that " she carried little children in her arms, supported the needy, surpassed priests in her love of Christ, and was assiduous day and night in sacred offices." It was she, who, though the almost lifelong opponent of Henry IV., yet begged for him Christian burial from Pope Pascal II., and had him decently interred in the Cathedral of Spires by the side of his once despised wife, Bertha.

Warlike though she was, she was a great lover of literature, and her library at Lucca was the most famous in all Italy. It was by her will that Bishop Anselm wrote a commentary on the Psalms and a compendium of Canon Law. Learned in Greek and Latin, yet humble as a child, well might Gregory write to her: " We rely with more confidence on your noble devotion than on the promises and support of all the Kings in the world; and this confidence is inspired by your words, your actions, your zeal, your piety, your faith, and your constancy."

The Story of Hildebrand

In his great poem, Dante shows Matilda as a beautiful woman, singing and gathering flowers near the banks of the river Lethe. "She precedes the mystic chariot of Rome on which Beatrice is riding"

> "Singing, like unto an enamoured lady,
> 'Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata.'"

Printed in England.